



2022 FINDINGS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR





In Memoriam

Kristen Elise Pancio, a dear colleague and friend, passed away on January 9, 2023. Kristen was a dedicated public servant in the Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking at the Bureau of International Labor Affairs and a champion of children's rights.

Cover photo:

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Nabiullah, 11 years old sells peanuts at the local market of Trinkot, Urozgan a central province in Afghanistan; he invested \$40 in a cart that includes an oven and gas cylinder, and 7Kg of peanuts. Trinkot, Afghanistan. January 16, 2021.

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All three of the U.S. Department of Labor's (USDOL) flagship reports on international child labor and forced labor are available on our website in HTML and PDF formats at dol.gov/ChildLaborReports. These reports include *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor*, as required by the Trade and Development Act of 2000; *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*, as required by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005; and *List of Products Produced by Forced or Indentured Child Labor*, as required by Executive Order 13126. On our website, you can navigate to individual country pages where you can find information on the prevalence and sectoral distribution of the worst forms of child labor; specific goods produced by child labor or forced labor; efforts each country has made to implement their commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in the areas of laws and regulations, institutional mechanisms for enforcement and coordination, and government policies and social programs; and specific suggestions for government actions to address the issue of child labor.

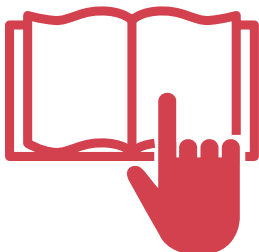
You can also access USDOL's *Comply Chain: Business Tools for Labor Compliance in Global Supply Chains* online at dol.gov/ComplyChain. *Comply Chain* is a practical guide for companies to develop strong social compliance systems to reduce child labor and forced labor in supply chains. Companies can explore modules including stakeholder engagement, code of conduct provisions, auditing, remediation, reporting, and engagement, among others.

Finally, you can access USDOL's *Better Trade Tool* on our website at dol.gov/BetterTradeTool. This tool's dynamic dashboards and custom queries allow users to view and analyze U.S. and global trade data for use in identifying potential child labor and forced labor risks in global supply chains.



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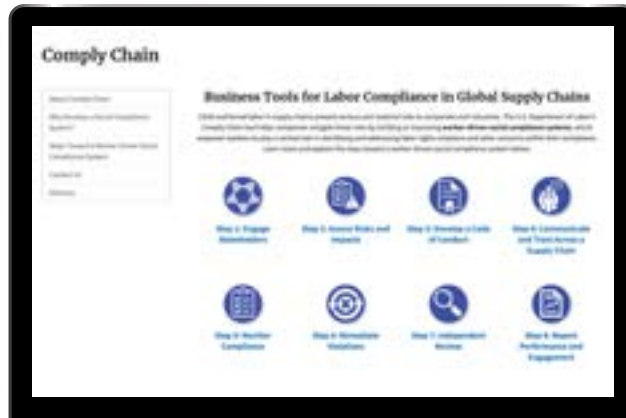
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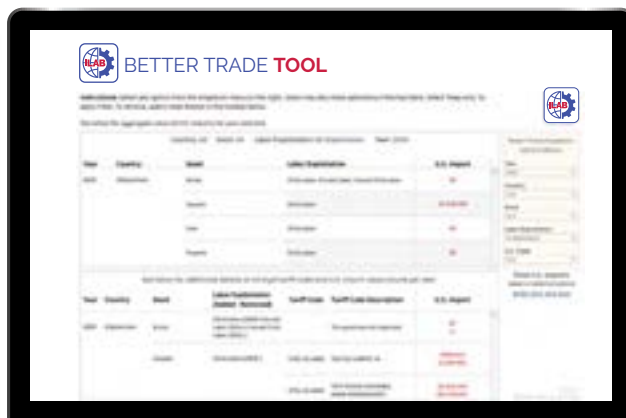
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Girls sit in a classroom preparing for class. Yaounde, Cameroon. September 17, 2022.

Foreword

Ninety years ago, Frances Perkins served as Secretary of Labor and became the first woman appointed to the U.S. Cabinet. She fiercely advocated to end child labor and to institute other labor protections we now take for granted. Throughout her life and in her tenure as Secretary of Labor, she championed the role of unions and the need for social and legal protections—including a national minimum wage, unemployment insurance safety net, and social security. She also brought a global focus to the job, participating in International Labor Organization conferences as early as 1935.

The Biden-Harris Administration and the Department of Labor continue to build on Frances Perkins' enduring legacy to empower and support all workers, to end child labor and forced labor in the United States and across the world, and to uplift workers' rights internationally.

Unfortunately, around the globe workers are often denied the rights they deserve. The Department of Labor has identified a significant increase in child labor in the United States. We also have a responsibility to address labor abuses and take the lead on a global stage. To do so, we need a clear understanding of the conditions leading to harsh labor practices. Our annual *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* report includes an assessment of efforts to end child labor in more than 130 countries and territories and serves as a blueprint for action.

We must also center workers and workers' voices in efforts to overhaul the systems that profit off their exploitation. Through the Multilateral Partnership for Organizing, Worker Empowerment, and Rights initiative, or M-POWER, we can help empower workers to drive change and bring the

rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining to the forefront. The U.S. government has already invested an unprecedented \$130 million to secure these rights globally, and our partners—including five national governments, philanthropic institutions, civil society organizations, and academic entities—are helping bring these efforts to scale.



Workers need a voice in their workplace, their communities, and political systems so all workers, businesses and societies can thrive. Our Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor report provides critical data to help workers and worker advocates raise their voices effectively—thereby enriching their contributions and heightening their visibility.

Let's continue to be bold like Frances Perkins—by imagining a world without exploitative child labor and developing policies to empower labor activists and worker organizations to make that world real. Our collaborative efforts and collective action can uplift children's rights and ensure their time is spent learning in school and playing games at home, rather than toiling in fields and factories.

Julie A. Su

Julie A. Su
Acting Secretary of Labor
September 2023



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First graders at Tunua Elementary School studying in their classroom. Tunua Village, North Mollo Sub-District, Timor Tengah Selatan District, Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, Indonesia. October 5, 2022.

Statement

It is true both in the United States and around the world: ending child labor and forced labor is hard work. It requires more than just removing children and adults from exploitative work. This hard work also demands empowering workers to build and strengthen an environment of unionized workplaces, good benefits, and fair compensation to challenge labor exploitation and those who seek to profit and gain from it.

We must take a worker-centered approach to ending child labor and forced labor. First, and fundamentally, this requires standing up for workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively for family-sustaining wages and benefits. When workers raise their voices together to denounce exploitative and dangerous working conditions, they build collective power that can achieve lasting change that stands strong. We know, however, that many workers cannot do this safely, particularly those who toil in informal roles, at the start of global supply chains and far from view, or in countries that systematically repress these foundational rights, sometimes in concert with malevolent corporate actors.

In the U.S., a worker covered by a union contract earns 10% more on average than a peer with similar education, occupation, and experience in a nonunionized workplace in the same industry. Black workers represented by a union are paid 13% more than their nonunionized Black peers, and Hispanic workers represented by a union are paid nearly 19% more than their nonunionized Hispanic peers. (1) Outside the U.S., we also see positive effects for empowered workers. For example, collective bargaining agreements in the Honduran apparel sector have improved access to decent work, fair wages, and safe working conditions, reducing incentives to migrate. (2) And in Lesotho, unions and women's groups persuaded major brands to sign a binding agreement to combat gender-based violence

and harassment in garment factories.

A unionized workplace, in short, is a more equitable workplace, and it's less likely to experience exploitative labor conditions, including child labor.

Second, we need worker-informed policies, aided by strong labor law enforcement, clear expectations for responsible business conduct and compliance, and economic consequences for governments that fail to enforce the law and comply with international standards. It is vital for governments to enforce transparency as a key business responsibility through legally binding instruments, including government agencies that promote market access for companies who play by global rules or have mandatory due diligence in place and in practice. Such action is essential for accountability and to clear the marketplace of actors who tolerate, or even endorse, abusive labor practices and denial of fundamental labor rights.

Third, we need adequate social protection systems to ensure that poverty and vulnerability do not lead inexorably to child or forced labor.

The U.S. government is a leader in these efforts. We have committed to taking action to end forced labor by 2030 and child labor by 2025 under Target 8.7 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The Department of Labor has invested in the Alliance 8.7 Global Accelerator project, which supports countries in eradicating child labor and forced labor by replicating promising practices, strengthening partnerships, and spurring innovation. The project accelerates action to improve due diligence and



Thea Mei Lee
Deputy Undersecretary for
International Affairs

transparency in supply chains, strengthen worker voice, and increase access to social protections.

We are steadfast in our support of the Durban Call to Action, which emerged from the Fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor last year. We are working globally to eliminate child labor by promoting decent work, universal access to education and social protection, increased collaboration, and stronger laws and enforcement.

We are proud of our new M-POWER initiative—the Multilateral Partnership for Organizing, Worker Empowerment, and Rights. M-POWER is building a committed partnership of governments, worker organizations, and non-governmental organizations to take collective action to defend and uphold workers' rights globally, recognizing that freedom of association and collective bargaining are core elements of vibrant, resilient democracies. The M-POWER Action Plan includes four pillars: global issue campaigns supporting local action on worker priorities; country-level coordination to advance worker rights; urgent action to protect labor activists and organizations facing threats; and strategic communications to elevate worker voice and priorities. By advancing these goals, we create the conditions in which good jobs—not child or forced labor—can flourish.

The department's reports and tools provide the U.S. government and foreign governments a shared understanding of the problem: where it is and how to address it. We and other global actors are putting this research to work.

ILAB's *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* highlights 159 goods from 78 countries and areas vulnerable to child and forced labor. The latest version also details how some of these tainted goods enter into complex global supply chains and end up in commonly used products. This List is used by advocates, the private sector, NGOs, and governments to identify risks and where to focus remediation efforts.

Companies seeking to implement or improve due diligence also use *Comply Chain*, an online tool with a comprehensive set of best practices to address child and forced labor across global supply chains. This year we have enhanced *Comply Chain* to be more user-friendly and operational, including case studies and resources.

ILAB's Better Trade Tool matches information in our flagship reports to U.S. import trade data. Companies can see which imports have a higher risk of having been produced with child or forced labor, improving transparency and sourcing.

Our research and technical assistance impact enforcement as well. With our support, the ILO and Cornell University developed a forced labor detection handbook and hosted a workshop with South African labor, immigration, and fisheries officials. Later, authorities in South Africa detained a Taiwanese-flagged fishing vessel over suspected labor violations, the first detention action of this kind in five years.

We've also funded new projects to promote transparency and accountability in supply chains.

We awarded a new grant to the Fair Foods Standards Council to expand, for the first time internationally, the Fair Food Program model for promoting human rights and worker rights. The council will pilot the project in the cut flower sector of three countries—Chile, Mexico, and South Africa—as part of a feasibility study for further expansion of the model in other international agricultural supply chains. The model promotes transparency and accountability by empowering farmworkers to report on labor rights issues, holding participating growers responsible for addressing and taking steps to prevent labor rights infractions, and leveraging the influence of participating buyers to secure greater adherence to labor rights in global supply chains.

We also funded a new project with the International Labor Organization to increase worker voice and address forced labor, child labor, and other labor

violations in cattle-raising areas of Brazil and Paraguay.

We recognize that no government, including our own, can do this alone. Whether you represent a company, a government, a union or civil society organization, or are a worker, we hope you look to us as a partner in the fight to end child labor and forced labor. We are strategically investing resources toward these efforts and call upon others to do the same. Together, we can support workers' rights to organize and bargain

collectively, strengthen labor law enforcement, monitor and enforce labor provisions in trade policy, and secure adequate social protection systems in order to end child labor and forced labor.

Thea Mei Lee

Thea Mei Lee
Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs
September 2023





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Daniel, age 11, carries a bag of cobalt from the Kingiamiyambo mine, where he works ferrying sacks of cobalt. Kolwezi, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 2017.

Acknowledgments

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Copies of this and other reports in ILAB’s child labor and forced labor series may be obtained by contacting the Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room S-5315, Washington, D.C. 20210. Telephone: (202) 693-4843; e-mail: GlobalKids@dol.gov. The reports are also available on the web at <https://www.dol.gov/ilab>. Comments on these reports are welcome and may be submitted to GlobalKids@dol.gov.



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Mohammed, age 14, a Syrian refugee from Kobani, works underneath a car at a repair shop. Mohammed and his family fled violence in Kobani 3 years ago. He and his brother now work full time in an industrial area in Erbil to support their family. Mohammed and his five siblings have not been to school since they left Syria. Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq. March 10, 2016.

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MOZAMBIQUE	751	THAILAND	1001
NAMIBIA	758	TIMOR-LESTE	1012
NEPAL	766	TOGO	1019
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NIGER	785	TONGA	1030
NIGERIA	792	TUNISIA	1036
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PERU	859	YEMEN	1100
PHILIPPINES	869	ZAMBIA	1106
RWANDA	881	ZIMBABWE	1114



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Underage teens working in a coffee drying factory, drying coffee beans under the sun, in the rural areas of Jinotega, Jinotega, Nicaragua. January 28, 2014.

Purpose of This Report

Research Focus of the Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

USDOL prepared the 2022 *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* report in accordance with the Trade and Development Act of 2000 (TDA). (3) The TDA set forth the requirement that a country must implement its commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor for the President of the United States to designate the country a beneficiary developing country under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program (subject to an exception if designation is in the national economic interest of the United States). (4) The TDA also mandated that the President submit to the United States Congress the Secretary of Labor’s findings with respect to each, “beneficiary country’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.” (3) ILAB carries out this responsibility on behalf of the Secretary.

Country Coverage

This report covers 119 independent countries and 15 non-independent countries and territories designated as GSP beneficiaries. This includes former GSP recipients who have negotiated free trade agreements with the United States. (5) Because the population of children is extremely small (fewer than 50) or non-existent in the British Indian Ocean Territory, Heard Island and McDonald Islands, and the Pitcairn Islands, the report does not contain a discussion of these three non-independent countries and territories. The 2022 report presents information on child labor and the worst forms of child labor, and efforts to eliminate this exploitation in the remaining 119 countries and 12 non-independent countries and territories. The use of “countries” in this report includes territories, and because the report focuses on government efforts, non-independent countries and territories are classified by their associated regions.

Population Covered

In undertaking research on the “worst forms of child labor,” ILAB relies on the definition contained in International Labor Organization Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (ILO C. 182), which defines “child” as a person under age 18.

Reporting Period

The reporting period for this year’s report is January 2022 through December 2022. In certain cases, significant events or government efforts that occurred in early 2023 were included, as appropriate.

Type of Work

This report focuses on child labor and the worst forms of child labor. Definitions related to these types of work are primarily guided by International Labor Organization Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age (ILO C. 138) and ILO C. 182. Child labor includes work below the age of 15 (14 in developing economies where specified at the time of ratification of C. 138) or the higher minimum age as established in national legislation (excluding permissible light work) and the worst forms of child labor. The definition of “worst forms of child labor” is found in the TDA and is

the same as that included in ILO C. 182. It includes (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale or trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, or forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography, or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs; and (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances under which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children. (3; 6) Similar to ILO C. 182, the TDA states that the work described in subparagraph (d) shall be determined by the laws, regulations, or competent authority of the beneficiary developing country involved.”

Figure 1

Global Estimates on the Number of Working Children

Global Data on Child Labor, 5-17 Years Old



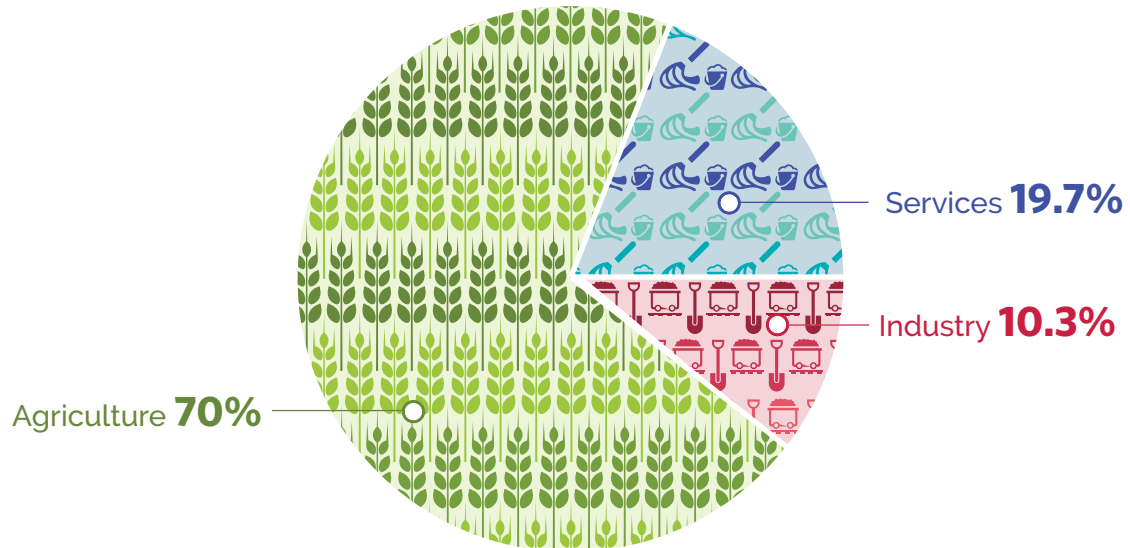
*Global estimates on the number of children engaged in categorical worst forms of child labor do not exist.

Source: ILO and UNICEF. *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward*. New York, 2021

Figure 2

Where 160 Million Children Work

Global Data on Child Labor by Sector, 5-17 Years Old



Source: ILO and UNICEF. *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward*. New York, 2021





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Sambilahatsa, 12 years old, dropped out of school and works in the Vohibola mica mine. Anosy, Madagascar. June 23, 2022.

2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Year in Review: A Just Transition to End Child Labor

The evidence that the Earth is warming at an unprecedented rate due to human activity is unquestionable. Although the Earth’s climate has fluctuated over time, this current and ongoing period of warming is at the highest rate recorded in more than 10,000 years. (7) A drastically changing climate impacts all of us, especially vulnerable families, workers, and communities, as extreme weather events increase in frequency, sea levels rise, and oceans warm. Climate change leads to irreparable harm, from local fishing stocks disappearing as seas warm, to a need for families and even whole communities to abandon homes due to natural disasters driven by climate change. In fact, over half a billion children are living in areas with extremely high levels of floods and nearly 160 million children live in high drought severity areas. (8) Other global research demonstrates that climate change and environmental degradation are increasingly driving children to more and riskier work. (9)

In the face of these challenges, the world must rise to the occasion. We need a “just transition” to an economy that is more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable—one that is based on clean energy free from fossil fuels, which are directly linked to rising temperatures and climate change. A just transition means that no people, workers, sectors, or countries should be forgotten in the move from high carbon use to low carbon use economies. Our clean-energy future cannot be built on the backs of children and adults in exploitative labor conditions.

A just transition entails decent wages for workers, health and economic benefits for communities, respect for labor rights, and an end to child labor and forced labor. Involving workers and their organizations in key decisions is vital to ensuring that workers and communities benefit from the transition. Read more about the vital role of unions in global efforts to end child labor in Box 1.

Box 1

Trade Unions' and Organized Labor's Vital Role in Fighting Child Labor

For over a century, workers have acted through unions to lead the fight to end child labor. At its first convention in 1881, the American Federation of Labor passed a resolution calling on states to set a minimum age for work. Sustained efforts on the part of organized labor helped President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as part of the New Deal, advocate for policies that supported the rights and livelihoods of adult workers while promoting an end to the child labor that undercut those rights and livelihoods. It was during this time that Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which set the minimum working age at 14 for employment outside of school hours and 16 during school hours. (10)

Today, the fight continues on a global scale, with 160 million children engaged in child labor worldwide. Winning this fight requires workers to have the right to organize and bargain collectively for family-sustaining wages, benefits, and social protection. It requires that workers have the voice and support to denounce exploitative and dangerous working conditions, and collectively advocate for better ones—so that families can find economic security and let their children be children, and so that no one's labor is forced from them.

Empirical research demonstrates the vital role unions play in combating child labor. The International Labor Organization (ILO), for example, has found that policy responses to child labor are most effective when coupled with policies to protect and enforce workers' freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. Exercising these rights allows workers to claim their share of the wealth they have helped create. Absent these rights, the reality becomes more children at work and more adults denied decent work.

Moreover, international research supported by ILAB demonstrates that collective bargaining is key to addressing root causes of labor abuse: "Through collective bargaining, workers—through their elected representatives—are better able to negotiate wages and working conditions, thereby reducing dependence on income earned by children. Strong, democratic trade unions and worker organizations lobby for the 'social wage,' including employment promotion, vocational training, and access to public education, all of which contribute to eradicating child labor." (11)

Every action that governments take to empower workers and trade unions has an exponential effect on combating child labor. With the sustained efforts of workers and organized labor, we can succeed in building stable families, vibrant communities, inclusive economies, and democratic societies free from labor abuse.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) produces essential resources—like this *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* report—to highlight the risks of child labor and forced labor in global supply chains that threaten to derail the world's transition to clean energy. ILAB also conducts broad, international research on child labor and forced labor and has undertaken targeted research in the clean energy sector, most recently in the solar and rechargeable lithium-ion battery supply chains. (12; 13; 14) In

addition, ILAB funds technical assistance projects that work to prevent and eliminate child labor, while also addressing some of the effects of climate change, including our SafeYouth@Work project, which focused on occupational safety and health awareness, including the prevention of heat stress ailments faced by agricultural workers in Colombia; and the PREP4Change project, which is ongoing and looks to address chronic kidney disease, a malady closely associated with heat stress afflicting agricultural workers. (15; 16)

ILAB also works with the G7, which Ministers of Labor, Employment and Social Affairs recently adopted a communiqué on agreements, action, and joint steps toward a just transition and the creation of decent, high-quality work for a sustainable green economy. (17) In addition, ILAB promotes workers' rights in the Indo-Pacific region through the negotiation of commitments under the Trade, Supply Chain, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy Pillars of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity. (18) And in early 2023, the U.S. and Japan

signed a Memorandum of Understanding to launch a Task Force on the Promotion of Human Rights and International Labor Standards in Supply Chains, bringing ILAB together with U.S. government and Japanese government agencies in the global effort to tackle labor exploitation and help create and strengthen clean energy supply chains in the U.S. and Japan. (19) Read more about ILAB's work to address labor risks in clean energy supply chains in Box 2 and review general project information in Figures 3 and 4.

Box 2

Addressing Child Labor and Forced Labor Risks in Global Energy Supply Chains

Paul never attended school. He was just 12 years old when he started working in an artisanal cobalt mine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). For years, Paul worked excessive hours underground and often without breaks or protective equipment. As the world transitions to renewable energy sources, demand for critical minerals like cobalt has soared. Unfortunately, these ores are often mined by children like Paul. His story is not unique. Thousands of children just like him, some as young as 4 years old, work in small-scale or "artisanal" mines around the world, excavating cobalt and other minerals. These children miss out on education and suffer from debilitating, sometimes life-long physical and mental health problems.

ILAB is taking significant steps to address these risks in mineral supply chains. Through our research, programming, and engagement, we can provide a more hopeful future for children like Paul. In fact, ILAB works closely with the governments of the DRC and other African countries, as well as with industry and civil society partners, to address child labor in clean energy supply chains. ILAB is promoting traceability, improving labor standards, and supporting local communities to reduce the risks of child and forced labor through projects like the Global Trace Protocol and Combatting Child Labor in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Cobalt Industry. (20; 21) ILAB is also committed to helping countries formalize and legalize their artisanal and small-scale mining sectors, which will strengthen safety, environmental, and labor protections.

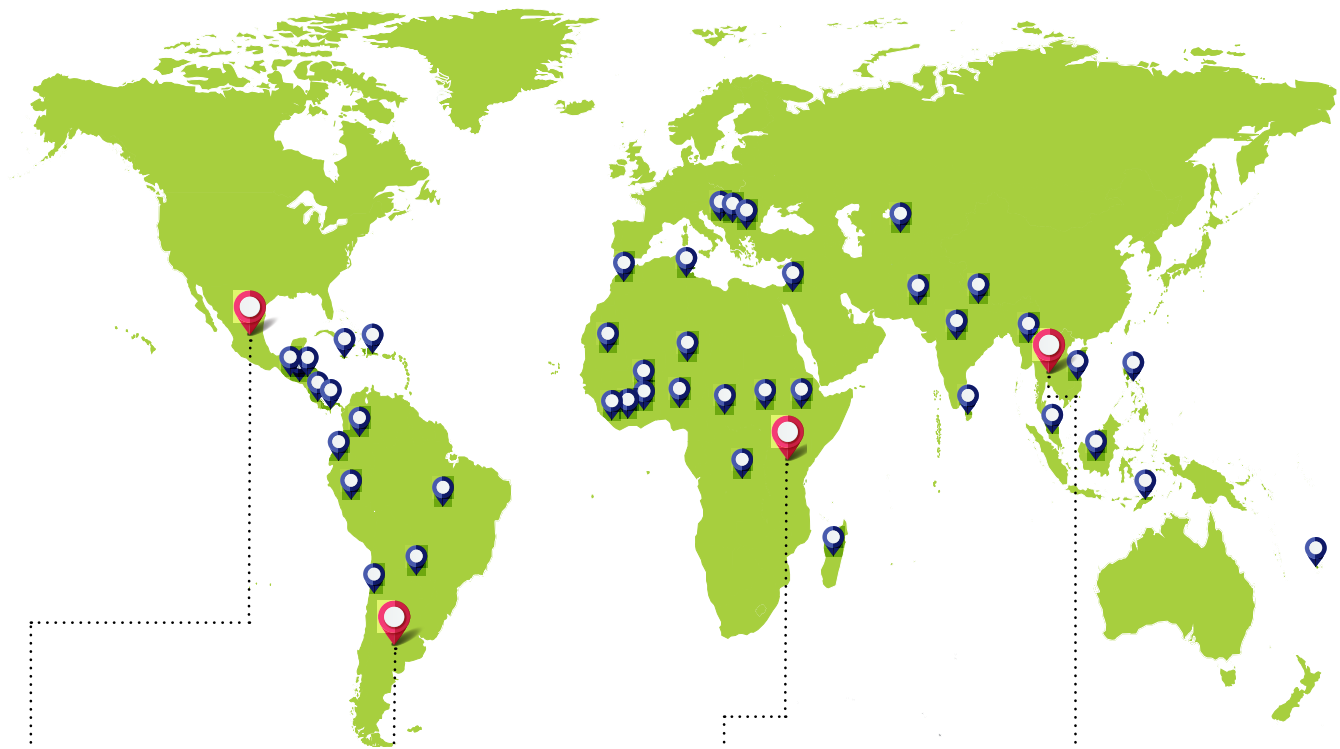
A just transition to a greener future is central to the Biden-Harris administration's strategy in Sub-Saharan Africa. The U.S.-African Leaders Summit, marking a watershed moment in the U.S.-Africa relationship, brought us one step closer to this goal. (22) The summit assembled American and African leaders in Washington to build on shared values, including addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development. At the conclusion of the summit, the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DRC and Zambia committing to support the joint development of an electric vehicle battery value chain within the two countries. (23)

We are in a singular position to signal to the world that clean energy supply chains can be free of child and forced labor. ILAB's work helps to ensure that minerals critical to this transition are produced in ways that enhance the dignity of all workers. The partnerships forged at the U.S.-African Leaders Summit demonstrate a commitment to achieving this goal. They offer children like Paul real hope for a brighter, cleaner future.

Figure 3

ILAB's Projects Addressing Child Labor and Forced Labor Around the World

ILAB supported **56** active projects & initiatives within **47** countries in 2022



EQUAL – Equal Access to Quality Jobs for Women and Girls in Mexico

In Mexico, women face many gender barriers to full inclusion in the labor market and access to decent work. There is limited government enforcement of laws on child labor, gender-based discrimination, and working conditions in agriculture, where many women and adolescent girls work. The EQUAL project is working to reduce the risk of child labor, forced labor, and other labor rights violations for women and adolescent girls (aged 15-17) working within the coffee and sugarcane sectors.

PAR – Multi-stakeholder Strategy for Child Labor Elimination in Agriculture in Argentina

Child labor in Argentina affects 9.4 percent of all children aged 5-15. Much of this occurs in agriculture. This project raises the visibility and understanding of child labor in agriculture. It contributes to improved tools and coordination among government, the private sector, and civil society to confront the problem, focusing on blueberry and yerba mate production.

CAPSA – Capacity Strengthening of Governments to Address Child Labor and/or Forced Labor, and Violations of Acceptable Conditions of Work in Sub-Saharan Africa

There are an estimated 79 million child laborers and 3.4 million forced laborers in sub-Saharan Africa. In Kenya, the CAPSA project is building government capacity to combat child labor and forced labor more effectively by helping them strengthen law enforcement, improve assistance for victims, and enhance coordination between law enforcement and social protection entities.

FAIR Fish – Fostering Accountability in Recruitment for Fishery Workers in Thailand

In the Asia-Pacific region, a large workforce of migrant workers catch, farm, and process most of the world's seafood. Many are recruited by third parties into exploitative jobs in illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. The FAIR Fish project works directly with seafood and fishing companies and their recruiters to improve responsible recruitment processes and address forced labor and human trafficking in recruitment.

Learn more about the people and places behind these projects. Check out our stories and videos here: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/success-stories>

Figure 4

ILAB's Impact

Making a Difference Since 1995



Demonstrating commitment and leadership in the worldwide movement to end child labor, which has contributed to a global **reduction of 86 million** child laborers since 2000

Providing education and vocational training opportunities to nearly **2 million** children



Increasing the capacity of **more than 85 countries** to address child labor and forced labor

Improving livelihoods for **nearly 200,000** vulnerable families



Training **more than 65,000** labor inspectors and law enforcement officials

Providing **more than 70,000** teachers with training to work with children affected by child labor



Supporting the collection of information on child labor and forced labor **through more than 300** surveys, including **more than 90** national child labor surveys

Visit www.dol.gov/EndChildLabor to learn more

The following pages provide an overview of global child labor in the year 2022 and detail the meaningful efforts that many countries made, as well as the enormous obstacles that remain before we can achieve a total abolition of child labor, especially in its worst forms. A world free of child labor is an ambitious goal—and a worthy one, without a doubt. Children deserve a world where they are free to develop into successful adults. To achieve that future, international cooperation is crucial. ILAB remains a leading voice on these efforts and part of the wider U.S. government commitment to put labor at the forefront of all our actions.

Overview of 2022 Assessments

This year, only 4 of 131 countries, down from 9 last year, achieved the highest assessment of Significant Advancement: **Argentina, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Uzbekistan** (see Figure 5 for a global breakdown of country assessments). These countries made meaningful efforts during the reporting period in all relevant areas—legal frameworks, enforcement, coordination, policies, and social programs. In some cases, these efforts included taking suggested actions recommended in our 2021 report. Each of the four countries met and/or exceeded the baseline of minimally acceptable protections needed to receive ILAB's highest assessment of Significant Advancement. All four countries achieving Significant Advancement this year received the same assessment last year. This is the second year in a row for both **Côte d'Ivoire** and **Uzbekistan**, the latter of which achieved its first ever Significant Advancement in 2021. **Argentina**, for its part, achieved its eighth consecutive assessment of Significant Advancement with this year's report. Moreover, this year's report represents the tenth Significant Advancement assessment for **Colombia**. Laudable as an assessment of Significant Advancement is, it represents a country's efforts only during the reporting period—from January 2022 to December 2022. Even countries that have achieved a Significant Advancement have more work to do, especially in the areas of labor and criminal law enforcement.

It is important to highlight that seven additional countries and territories would have received an assessment of Significant Advancement had they met the baseline level of protections. These countries are **Brazil, Cabo Verde, Madagascar, Moldova, Nigeria, Thailand, and Uganda**.

In total, 69 countries received an assessment of Moderate Advancement in 2022, a decline from 73 countries last year. These countries made meaningful efforts during the reporting period to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in some relevant areas affecting laws and regulations, enforcement, coordination, policies, and social programs. Unfortunately, 25 countries—an increase from 15 last year—received an assessment of Minimal Advancement for making efforts in only a few relevant areas.

Other countries also made efforts to address child labor during the year; yet because they simultaneously continued or established a detrimental law, policy, or practice that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor, the highest assessment level these countries could receive was Minimal Advancement. Twenty-one countries—**Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Cambodia; the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Dominican Republic; Gabon; Iraq; Kazakhstan; Kenya; the Kyrgyz Republic; Mali; Mauritania; Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha; Somalia; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Ukraine; Yemen; and Zimbabwe**—implemented or maintained a law, policy, or practice related to education, minimum age for work, labor inspection, impunity for perpetrators, criminal treatment of victims, or the recruitment and use of child soldiers that undermined their advancement. Three of these countries were new to this assessment level in 2022: **Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Dominican Republic**. Three countries were also removed from this level: the **Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), Montserrat, and Pakistan**.

Figure 5

Global Breakdown of Country Assessments

4 Significant Advancement

Argentina | Colombia | Côte d'Ivoire | Uzbekistan

69 Moderate Advancement

Albania | Angola | Belize | Benin | Bhutan | **Bolivia** ↑ | Bosnia and Herzegovina | **Botswana** ↑ | Brazil | Burkina Faso | Burundi | Cabo Verde | Cameroon | Chile | Comoros | **Costa Rica** ↓ | **Djibouti** ↑ | **Ecuador** ↓ | Egypt | El Salvador | Ethiopia | Gambia, The | Georgia | Ghana | **Guatemala** ↓ | Guinea | Guinea-Bissau | **Honduras** ↓ | India | Indonesia | Jamaica | **Jordan** ↓ | Kosovo | Lesotho | Liberia | Madagascar | Malawi | Maldives | Mauritius | Mexico | **Moldova** ↑ | Mongolia | Morocco | Nepal | Nigeria | Norfolk Island | Oman | **Pakistan** ↑ | Panama | Paraguay | Peru | Philippines | Saint Lucia | Samoa | Senegal | Serbia | Sierra Leone | **Solomon Islands** ↑ | South Africa | Sri Lanka | Suriname | Tanzania | Thailand | Togo | Tunisia | Uganda | **Vanuatu** ↑ | Western Sahara | Zambia

46 Minimal Advancement

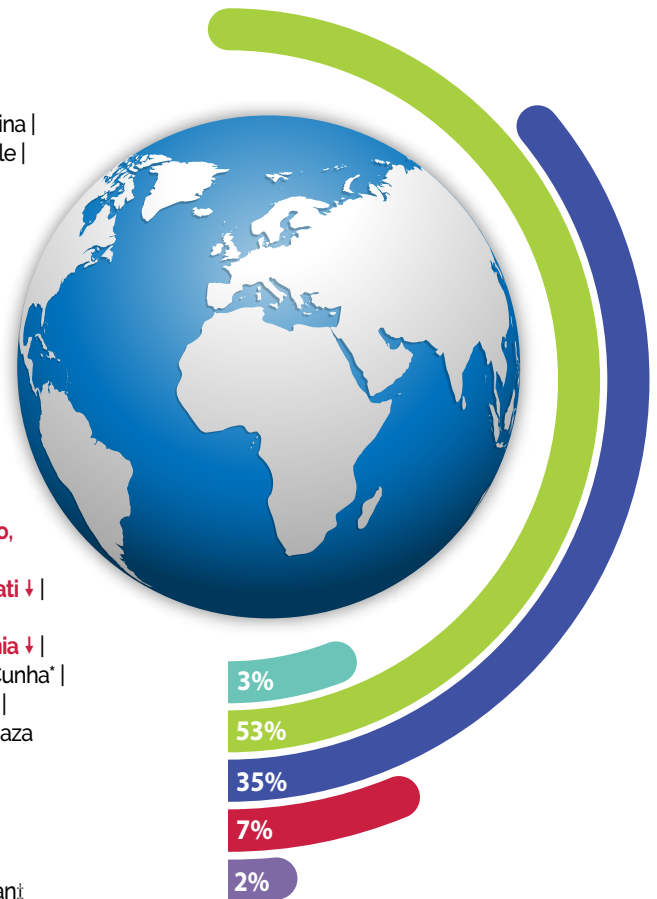
Algeria | Armenia* | Azerbaijan* | **Bangladesh** ↓ | Cambodia* | Central African Republic* | **Chad** ↓ | **Congo, Democratic Republic of the*** ↓ | **Congo, Republic of the** ↓ | **Cook Islands** ↓ | Dominica | **Dominican Republic*** ↓ | Eswatini | **Fiji** ↓ | Gabon* | Guyana | Haiti | Iraq* | Kazakhstan* | Kenya* | **Kiribati** ↓ | Kyrgyz Republic* | Lebanon | Mali* | Mauritania* | **Montenegro** ↓ | **Mozambique** ↑ | **Namibia** ↑ | Nicaragua | **Niger** ↓ | **Niue** ↑ | **North Macedonia** ↓ | Papua New Guinea | **Rwanda** ↓ | Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha* | **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** ↓ | **São Tomé and Príncipe** ↓ | Somalia* | Timor-Leste* | **Tokelau** ↑ | Tonga* | Tuvalu | Ukraine* | West Bank and the Gaza Strip | Yemen* | Zimbabwe*

9 No Advancement

Afghanistan | Anguilla | British Virgin Islands | Burma‡ | Eritrea‡ | **Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)*** ↓ | Grenada | **Montserrat*** ↓ | South Sudan‡

3 No Assessment

Christmas Island | Cocos (Keeling) Islands | Wallis and Futuna



* Efforts made but regression or continued law, policy, or practice that delayed advancement

‡ Efforts made but complicit in forced child labor

↑ Increase in assessment level

↓ Decrease in assessment level

Five countries received an assessment of No Advancement because they made no effort to prevent the worst forms of child labor: **Anguilla**, the **British Virgin Islands**, the **Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)**, **Grenada**, and **Montserrat**. **Afghanistan** also received a No Advancement during the reporting period due in part to the escalating humanitarian crisis following the Taliban takeover in 2021. The Taliban actively recruited and used children as part of their security forces and considered some child trafficking victims, especially those engaged in *bacha bazi* or armed conflict, as criminals, housing them in juvenile detention centers and subjecting them to torture and other forms of ill treatment rather than referring them to victim support services.

In addition, some countries could only receive an assessment of No Advancement because they had a policy or demonstrated a practice of being complicit in the use of forced child labor in more than isolated incidents. The list remains unchanged for 2 years now, since the 2020 report, and comprises **Burma**, **Eritrea**, and **South Sudan**. These countries were found to be complicit in the use of worst forms of child labor during the reporting period, Burma in forced labor for non-combat roles in conflict areas, Eritrea in public works projects, and South Sudan in forced recruitment for armed conflict. Learn more about the U.S. government's business advisory related to conducting business in South Sudan in Box 3.

Figure 6

Baseline of Minimally Acceptable Protections



In order for a country to be eligible to receive an assessment of Significant Advancement, a country must have:

LEGISLATION

- ✓ Established a minimum age for work that meets international standards;
- ✓ Established a minimum age for hazardous work that meets international standards;
- ✓ Established legal prohibitions against forced labor that meet international standards;
- ✓ Established legal prohibitions against child trafficking that meet international standards;
- ✓ Established legal prohibitions against commercial sexual exploitation of children that meet international standards;
- ✓ Established legal prohibitions against the use of children for illicit activities that meet international standards;

ENFORCEMENT

- ✓ Designated a competent authority or implemented institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor;
- ✓ Imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor;
- ✓ Took active measures to ensure that children are not inappropriately incarcerated, penalized, or physically harmed for unlawful acts as a direct result of being a victim of the worst forms of child labor;
- ✓ Took active measures to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence public officials who participate in or facilitate the worst forms of child labor;
- ✓ Made a good-faith effort to collect and publish labor and criminal law enforcement data; and

SOCIAL PROGRAMS

- ✓ Directly funded a significant social program that includes the goal of eliminating child labor or addresses the root causes of the problem (e.g., lack of education opportunities, poverty, discrimination)

Box 3

Ongoing Business Risks in South Sudan

The U.S. Department of Labor, with the U.S. Departments of State and Commerce, issued a Business Advisory on South Sudan to highlight the growing reputational, legal, and economic risks to U.S. businesses and individuals conducting or contemplating business in South Sudan, particularly with companies that have strong ties to South Sudan's extended transitional government. (24)

These risks stem from the government's August 2022 decision to extend the 4-year transitional government, which was mandated to conclude in February 2022, despite failing to address pervasive and endemic corruption in the public and private sectors of the economy. Leaders in the country allocate resources to fund and equip security forces and militias loyal to political elites who have been implicated in human rights violations, including in the forcible recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, which ranks among the worst forms of child labor. Reports also indicate that the government forcibly uses children in combat and in support roles as cooks, porters, and spies. These and other actions exacerbate reputational, economic, and legal risks for foreign businesses and individuals operating in South Sudan.

"The transitional government in South Sudan has shown an unwillingness to address the corruption and illegal activity in its ranks that have given rise to labor and human rights violations throughout the country," said Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs, Thea Lee. This "business advisory reminds U.S. businesses that engaging with companies or individuals associated with a government complicit in human rights violations legitimizes these unethical practices," she also remarked.

The Department of Labor strongly encourages businesses and individuals with operations in South Sudan to avoid the reputational, legal, and economic risks of association with the South Sudanese transitional government and with companies that have significant ties to the transitional government.

For this year's report, only **Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and Wallis and Futuna** received No Assessment. This assessment is reserved for countries or territories in which the population of children is either non-existent or extremely small, there is no evidence of the worst forms of child labor and the country appears to have an adequate preventative legal and enforcement framework on child labor, or a country is included in the report for the first time or receives a suggested action for the first time.

Overview of Meaningful Efforts

Despite the persistence of child labor and its worst forms, there are notable efforts worthy of recognition. These efforts offer insights into how various countries tackle child labor and demonstrate that together, and through collective action, the world can move forward in its goals to eliminate child labor.

Legal

In this year's reporting cycle, several countries undertook meaningful efforts to ratify key international commitments in support of fundamental principles and rights at work. For example, **Mexico** ratified the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention 29. The Government of **Panama** ratified the ILO Labor Inspection (Agriculture) Convention 129, which is meant to strengthen the country's labor inspection capacity in agricultural sectors. **Botswana** acceded to the ILO Labor Inspection Convention 81 and the Labor Inspection (Agriculture) Convention 129, which together outline principles for development of strong labor inspection systems, including in the agricultural sector—the sector in which child labor occurs most commonly on a global scale. **Chad's** government also ratified the International

Figure 7

Minimum Age for Work

ILO C. 138 sets the minimum age for work at 15 years (or 14 as appropriate)* and specifies that it shall not be less than the compulsory education age.

85

countries do not have a minimum age for work that meets international standards

Of the 85 countries, **19** have laws that exclude certain groups of working children from minimum age protections. **3** countries also have no minimum age for work at all.

Niue ■ Tokelau ■ Tonga

* Countries whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may initially specify a minimum legal working age of 14 when ratifying the convention.

Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Finally, on July 1, 2022, the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention 190 entered into force in **Mauritius**. This Convention provides a common framework for action and a unique opportunity to shape a future of work based on dignity and respect and reinforces the rights of everyone to a world free from violence and harassment.

Bhutan also ratified the Palermo Protocol; the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and the United Nations Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. In addition, Australia ratified the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention 29, a fundamental Convention for the abolition of forced labor, including forced child labor, which extends to Australia's various external territories, namely **Christmas Island**, **Cocos (Keeling) Islands**, and **Norfolk Island**. Lastly, the Government of the **Solomon Islands** also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Optional

Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

Other countries and territories took steps to provide children with protections against hazardous work. **Bangladesh** revised its list of hazardous work prohibited for children to include five additional sectors: dried fish manufacturing; informal street-based child labor; production, collection, and transportation of bricks; tailoring and informal production of garments; and waste management. **Liberia** also approved a new hazardous work list, which identified specific occupations and tasks prohibited for children, including sugarcane cleaning and harvesting, rubber tapping, palm cutting, bush clearing, and harvesting cocoa. **Angola** published a new list of hazardous work and established criteria for permissible work for children ages 16 and above, including the requirement to have a medical statement of good physical and mental health and an evaluation of the risks of that activity. These delineations of what constitutes hazardous work are essential to ensuring that children do not perform hazardous and dangerous tasks. Learn more about

Figure 8



Minimum Age for Hazardous Work

ILO C. 138 sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 years (or 16 under certain strict conditions)*

22

countries do not have a minimum age for hazardous work that meets international standards

Anguilla ■ Belize ■ Dominica ■ Eritrea ■ Ethiopia ■ Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) ■ Grenada ■ Guyana ■ Kazakhstan ■ Nepal ■ Niue ■ Pakistan ■ Panama ■ Papua New Guinea ■ Saint Vincent and the Grenadines ■ Solomon Islands ■ Timor-Leste ■ Tokelau ■ Tonga ■ Uganda ■ Ukraine ■ Vanuatu

What is Hazardous Child Labor?

ILO Recommendation 190¹ calls on governments to consider the following when determining work that is prohibited for children.



Work which exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse



Work underground, under water, at dangerous heights, or in confined spaces



Work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads



Work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health



Work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer

¹ International Labor Organization. Recommendation 190. Geneva: June 1999. <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/com-chir.htm>.

about the minimum age for work in Figure 7 and hazardous child labor in Figure 8.

Some countries also took steps to expand civil legal protections against child labor and ensure that laws comprehensively cover those at risk. For example, in **Sri Lanka**, the government amended its Children and Young Persons Ordinance to define individuals

under 18 years old as children, compared to 16 years old previously, which brings this law into compliance with international standards. **Mongolia's** Ministry of Labor issued a decree that clarifies the list of light work activities permitted to children between the ages of 13 and 15. **Chile** increased prison sentences for perpetrators of child trafficking and the commercial

sexual exploitation of children and passed a law to protect minors from economic exploitation. In **Zambia**, updates to the country's Trafficking in Persons Act brought the country's legal framework in line with international standards. Strong legal standards that are backed by robust enforcement are the bedrock that countries need to end child labor, including its worst forms.

Enforcement

New developments in laws coupled with meaningful enforcement help build a strong system of protection against child labor, especially its worst forms. To that end, several countries strengthened online protections for children as the world grows increasingly digital. **Tunisia** launched a digital platform in late 2022 to improve coordination among service responders of abuse against children, including child labor. In **Burkina Faso**, the Ministry of Labor created a mobile application for labor inspectors to help determine the dangers children are exposed to, direct them toward appropriate services, and verify that they have been removed from worksites. Further, in **Thailand**, 220 police officers received training on digital forensic investigations and evidence collection, while in **Albania**, the State Inspectorate for Labor and Social Services developed an online tool to improve transparency around penalties, particularly when a fine can be issued and the amount of the fine.

Efforts to protect children depend on good data. In 2022, countries published new data on labor and criminal law enforcement, sometimes for the first time. For example, **Samoa** published information about its number of labor inspectors and **Lesotho** and **Tanzania** made new enforcement data available. For the first time in several years, **Benin** published criminal law enforcement data on cases related to the worst forms of child labor. **Botswana** provided information covering all labor law enforcement data points in this year's report, offering an opportunity for a deeper level of dialogue and targeted

enforcement recommendations. Also, for the first time, **Egypt** provided comprehensive criminal law enforcement data.

Beyond making data available, some countries made meaningful efforts to increase their number of labor inspectors and raise funding levels for their labor inspectorates. For example, **Colombia** created an elite group of inspectors to better focus on child labor and increased its total corps of labor inspectors by about 32 percent relative to last year. While the number of labor inspectors remains insufficient, **Panama** made progress by nearly doubling its number of labor inspectors, from 105 to 198, and **Haiti** hired 29 new labor inspectors. **Georgia** further increased its number of labor inspectors from 109 to 123, which provides for an adequate number of labor inspectors to perform their mandated duties. **Georgia** also created a group of specialized labor inspectors to identify instances of forced labor and trafficking for labor exploitation and opened branch offices to increase its operational presence in the western part of the country.

Similarly, some countries in Africa significantly increased their number of labor inspectors. **Ghana**, for example, quadrupled its number of labor inspectors from 48 to 189, and **Benin** more than doubled its number of labor inspectors from 35 to 72. Zanzibar—a sub-region operating autonomously in terms of labor law enforcement from Mainland **Tanzania**—increased annual funding for its labor inspectorate from \$10,000 to \$183,000. The Government of **Guinea** significantly increased its labor inspectorate funding from \$11,500 to \$174,182. In Asia, **Maldives** increased its labor inspectorate's budget, raising the number of labor inspectors from 23 to 32, including those labor inspectors designated for opening branches on additional islands. While these increases are encouraging, in many instances, further increases in the number of labor inspectors are necessary to ensure adequate coverage for a country's labor force.

Other countries enhanced and delivered training in novel ways. **Belize** introduced new standard operating procedures for trafficking in persons and began training prosecutors and magistrates on using the procedures to refer survivors to care. In **Albania**, inspectors received training on regulations related to the employment of minors, while **Chile** developed training modules on child labor and migration for enforcement personnel. In **Guinea-Bissau**, the National Guard, lacking financial and logistical resources, created grassroots committees within villages near border locations to identify human traffickers using illegal border crossings.

Regarding criminal enforcement efforts, **Argentina's** government prosecuted at least 16 individual defendants for child exploitation and achieved 6 convictions that sentenced 12 individuals with prison terms ranging from 6 to 25 years. The Government of **Suriname** also secured 10 convictions for crimes related to child labor. Two police officials in the country were found guilty and received prison sentences for child trafficking. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, 6 offenders were sentenced to a total of 74 years imprisonment, the highest length sentence for trafficking in persons to date in that country.

Madagascar's National Police and Gendarmerie collaborated with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation on a case that led to the conviction of an American offender for online sexual exploitation of underage Malagasy girls. **Guinea-Bissau** initiated the first child labor prosecutions in nearly 10 years.

Those who prey on workers often cross borders, impeding officials seeking to enforce laws because officials have reached the limits of their jurisdiction. Because of this reality, partnerships with other countries remain essential to address persistent labor abuse and bring justice to criminals and compassion to survivors. In 2022, **Suriname** signed bilateral and regional enforcement arrangements with neighboring **Brazil**, **Guyana**, and French Guiana, that included language on joint efforts to combat cross-border criminal activities, including human trafficking. Officials in **Bangladesh** and **India** also worked together to repatriate 21 women and children who were victims of trafficking. Learn more about global enforcement efforts in Figure 9.

Coordination

New coordination mechanisms and action plans are some of the meaningful efforts made this year.

Figure 9

Global Enforcement Efforts*



31

Have an adequate number of labor inspectors



99

Have a mechanism to assess civil penalties



80

Conducted routine labor inspections



78

Conducted unannounced inspections



105

Have a complaint mechanism for labor violations

*Out of 131 countries

Coordination among government ministries, both those enforcing laws and those providing services, helps ensure that criminals are prosecuted, and victims receive care and support. At times, these interagency bodies also help to conduct trainings on child labor-related issues and ensure that the training is uniform across the government.

Cambodia established 14 municipal and provincial committees on countering child labor. **Suriname's** National Commission on Combating Child Labor was highly active in calendar year 2022: it met six times, translated television and radio awareness-raising programs into six languages, and distributed flyers about child labor across the country.

Despite the ongoing aggression and territorial incursions made by Russia against **Ukraine**, the Ukrainian government established a coordination body to support the temporary domestic and international evacuation of Ukrainian children living in various government institutions in areas affected by Russia's invasion. In **Serbia**, the government signed a plan to streamline collaboration to improve the status of street children. **Tunisia** launched a digital platform to improve coordination among agencies that respond to child abuse. And in **Algeria**, the National Authority for the Protection and Promotion of Children launched an online platform to increase coordination among civil society organizations working on child protection issues.

In cooperation with UN Office on Drugs and Crime, **Senegal's** National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons developed standard operating procedures for the identification, investigation, and referral of cases of trafficking in persons. **Côte d'Ivoire's** government created the National Sustainable Cocoa Committee, and **Comoros** established the National Committee on the Prevention of Illegal Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons. In **Madagascar**, a regional committee in Fianarantsoa conducted field visits to markets, brickmaking sites, and stone quarries to monitor child labor and raise awareness among parents. Lastly, **Mozambique's** Ministry of Labor

and Social Security convened the government's first national conference on the elimination of child labor and subsequently held eight province-level conferences on child labor and human trafficking.

Policy

During this year's reporting period, countries established or implemented policies to address child labor. In the **Philippines**, the Department of Education passed a new education plan, which will serve as a roadmap for improving the government's delivery and quality of basic education, covering education from 5 to 18 years of age, as well as non-formal education for youths and adults. The country also approved the fourth National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons to provide government agencies with direction for the Philippines' anti-trafficking in persons responses. **Thailand** drafted and approved its fifth National Policy and Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

In **Brazil**, the Rio de Janeiro City Government launched its first municipal plan to combat the sexual exploitation of children. In **Honduras**, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security approved the creation of a special child labor seal to incentivize the private sector to implement good practices and promote compliance with standards for preventing child labor. The **Dominican Republic** also launched a plan to rescue children and adolescents found living on the streets and vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.

Jordan updated its national framework to reduce child labor and extended it to 2030. **Morocco** approved a national strategy to address trafficking in persons, which also applies to **Western Sahara**. The **Central African Republic** established a national action plan to combat child trafficking, which includes a specific focus on preventing children from being recruited and used in armed conflict. **Madagascar** launched a new national action plan on trafficking in persons.

As a sign of international cooperation across Africa, **The Gambia** signed an MOU with **Nigeria**, which includes commitments to coordinate on

prosecutions and facilitate the safe return of survivors to their country of origin. In December 2022, **Benin** also cooperated with the Governments of **Burkina Faso**, **Togo**, and **Côte d'Ivoire** on a joint operation that resulted in the arrest of 15 suspected traffickers and the release and reintegration of 90 child trafficking survivors.

Programs

Countries also undertook surveys to learn about the prevalence and sectoral distribution of child labor. This information allows for more targeted efforts to address child labor. For instance, the Government of **Fiji** published the results of its Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in August 2022. **Bangladesh** launched its first national study on trafficking in persons, which will help provide baseline information about the extent of human trafficking and examine how these crimes are committed. And **Uzbekistan** worked with the International Labor Organization to conduct a survey of working conditions in the construction sector.

The Government of **Ethiopia** supported a study of child domestic servitude to learn how to better prevent this form of child labor. In **Djibouti**, the Ministry of Women and Families conducted a study on over 1,130 children engaged in forced begging. The study found that 84 percent of the children were from Ethiopia, almost 35 percent had been verbally assaulted, over 32 percent physically assaulted, and nearly 5 percent sexually assaulted. This detailed information helps countries target social programs and efforts to address child labor. In Box 4, learn more about how data on child labor at the local level can make a difference in communities.

Data can also lead to more targeted and innovative programs. **Indonesia** is commended on the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection's launch of a 3-year program to combat online sexual exploitation of children, with support from UNICEF. **Bolivia**'s municipal government of Santa Cruz trained 300 university students to volunteer in a program that offers services and support to children who work

in the markets with their families. In **Thailand**, the Thailand Safe Internet Coalition, a partnership led by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, UNICEF, and Thai telecommunications companies and internet service providers, was formed to strengthen reporting of online abuse, enhance coordination, improve provision of services for survivors, and increase the awareness of children, young people, and parents to online risks. The Ministry, in tandem with the Royal Thai Police, Court of Justice, and NGOs, also held a series of meetings with human trafficking survivors to create and publish guidelines for the public on identifying victims of online sexual exploitation.

The Government of **Cambodia** committed \$10 million to the implementation of its National Action Plan on Early Childhood Care and Development, which prioritizes an expanded early learning curriculum, improved teaching materials, and a reinforced preschool teaching workforce. The Government of **Albania** and the UN signed a new commitment to continue working on economic and social reforms to improve the situation for vulnerable populations throughout the country. And **Guinea**'s government, with funding from the European Union, opened shelters for trafficking survivors, including child survivors.

Other countries made efforts to grow and enhance existing programs. For example, in 2022, **Argentina**'s Universal Child Allowance Program increased the payment amount by nearly 10 percent to beneficiaries in comparison to the prior year. In addition, **Brazil**'s *Auxílio Brasil* cash transfer program reached unprecedented levels by extending assistance to over 21.5 million families, and **Togo**'s Safety Nets and Basic Services Project expanded unconditional cash transfers to 83,681 program participants.

More work remains, but these examples provide a snapshot of the hundreds of meaningful efforts made by the countries and territories in this year's report. Read on to learn more about the work that remains and major gaps in relevant areas.

Box 4

Turning Data Into Action to Mitigate Child Labor

At just age 15, Isabel knows what it is like to worry about money. Two years ago, her father got sick, lost his job, and had to find part-time construction work in another city in Mexico. The family's income was tight, putting Isabel and her siblings at high risk of engaging in child labor.

Isabel and her siblings avoided that fate in part thanks to their local municipality of Villa Victoria and Mexico's child labor risk identification model, the *Modelo de Identificación del Riesgo de Trabajo Infantil* (MIRTI). The MIRTI helped to identify the family as vulnerable to child labor, and, in turn, the municipal government used this information to provide a scholarship to help with Isabel's school expenses and funds to cover some of the family's expenses. This support helped to reduce the risk for Isabel and her siblings of engaging in child labor and increased their likelihood of staying in school, which is their mother's hope.

"I want my children to be someone in life, to progress, to keep studying, to have the opportunities that I didn't have," says Antonia, Isabel's mother.

The MIRTI was developed in 2018 as part of the Regional Initiative for Latin America Free of Child Labor (RILAC) with the support of ILAB's MAP 16 project. (25; 26) Mexico is the first country in the region to adopt the new model. As part of this process, the project provided training to officials on how to implement the MIRTI, building their capacity to carry it forward.

Out of the 32,000 children in Villa Victoria, 14,000 are at risk for or engaged in child labor. Isabel's age group, youth 12 to 17 years old, are most at risk of dropping out of school to migrate to Mexico City for work or to get a job locally selling goods or harvesting maize and potatoes. In Mexico, many children who reach the legal working age of 15 drop out of school to work, but they often find themselves in precarious jobs, leaving them vulnerable to poverty and labor exploitation.

"The MIRTI helped us quantify the number of child laborers and families at risk. Before the MIRTI we didn't know how to best channel our limited resources to help our community," says Laura Colin Santana, Secretary of the Municipality of Villa Victoria.

The model uses existing survey and administrative data to develop maps showing vulnerability to child labor, making it a cost-effective method to get information about child labor risk into the hands of policymakers at the local, state, and national levels. With this information, officials can direct resources, like meals, medical and legal assistance, scholarship funds, and other social support to vulnerable communities and families.

Ana Alejandra is familiar with the challenges facing families in the municipality. In her role as a census volunteer for the MIRTI, she interviews children and families and gathers data on child labor in Villa Victoria.

"I never imagined there were so many children working," Ana says, noting that some child laborers she meets are as young as 10 years old.

She always asks child laborers why they are working to try to identify alternative solutions for them, and she encourages them to stay in school, even if they continue to work.

While the municipality lacks the resources to meet the needs of all vulnerable kids and families, the MIRTI is helping make the child labor problem more visible, which in turn helps Villa Victoria secure more resources from the state to support children and families. Still, there is more work ahead and more families to serve.

"If we have data on child labor at the local level, all we have to do is channel our resources and join forces to make a difference in the community," says Isis Gutiérrez Salmerón, Honorary President of the Municipal System for Integral Family Development, one of the municipal agencies partnering with the MIRTI.

Overview of Major Gaps

Gaps remain in our collective efforts as a global community to abolish child labor, in particular its worst forms. When children engage in child labor, they sacrifice their education, wellbeing, and development, which limits their future opportunities. Today, children remain vulnerable to dangerous work in many sectors, including the back-breaking process of brickmaking; repeated exposure to hazardous chemicals and risky conditions in mining; and horrific abuse from commercial sexual exploitation, all due to gaps in legislation, enforcement, coordination mechanisms, policies, and programs.

Legal

Laws matter. Laws are the framework a country has in place to ensure children are protected from child labor, including its worst forms, and that prosecutors use to ensure those who commit these crimes face penalties. However, this year's report describes many gaps in this area. Of the 2,047 suggested actions presented in this year's report, 508 out of the over 2,000 total (or 25%) relate to deficiencies in laws and regulations. See Figure 10 for more information about global gaps in laws and regulations.

Ninety percent of countries in this report do not meet international standards for at least one category of child labor law. For example, out of the 131 countries in this report, 29 countries do not have minimum age protections that extend to the informal sector. Twenty-five countries do not have laws that prohibit child trafficking in accordance with international standards. In addition, prohibitions related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards in 39 countries; 17 countries do not have adequate prohibitions related to forced labor; and 39 countries have not adequately prohibited the use of children in illicit activities.

Many countries' laws providing free and compulsory education do not meet international standards. This is particularly acute in Caribbean countries, such as **Dominica**, **Grenada**, and **Saint Lucia**, which only guarantee free education to citizens of Member States or Associated Member States of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States. Another example from the Caribbean is **Jamaica**, which restricts free education to citizens of the country, leaving children without citizenship vulnerable to child labor. In 35 countries across every region covered in this report, the minimum age for work is also lower than the

Figure 10

Global Gaps in Law and Regulations*



25 Countries' prohibitions of child trafficking do not meet international standards

39 Countries' prohibitions of commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards

17 Countries' prohibitions of forced labor do not meet international standards

39 Countries' prohibitions of the use of children in illicit activities do not meet international standards

*Out of 131 countries



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Anas, age 12, cuts iron in a workshop. After the death of his father, Anas is the only breadwinner in the family. He works 11-hour shifts as a metalsmith, operating dangerous machinery that puts his health, safety, and future at risk. Taizz, Yemen. September 29, 2020.

compulsory education age, which may encourage children to drop out of school before completing their compulsory education.

Enforcement

Gaps related to enforcement account for 769 of the 2,047 (or 38%) suggested actions in this year’s report, the single largest category, as was the case in 2021. Data are also key to solving this problem. Unfortunately, many countries do not collect and/or publish information on enforcement of child labor laws. With more than 160 unique suggested actions related to the lack of information, it is evident that insights into labor and criminal law enforcement are missing on a global scale.

Despite the lack of labor law enforcement data, it is evident that many inspectorates do not have sufficient funding and/or are not fully staffed with labor inspectors. Countries including **Cameroon, Chad, El Salvador, Grenada, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Sierra Leone, and Uganda**, among others, face resource constraints and funding levels that limit their ability to fully enforce legislation. Even with committed public servants, many labor inspectorates lack adequate funding, training, and resources to address child labor. Resource constraints, such as insufficient fuel and transport, can result in a lack of inspections in areas where child labor is known to occur, including in rural or remote areas, agricultural fields, and mines. In **Sri Lanka**, routine inspections, especially of factories in the northern and eastern provinces, were limited by insufficient staffing, insufficient budget, and a fuel shortage.

Some labor inspectorates do not have the authority to inspect all workplaces, or even to carry out inspections. In **Botswana**, labor inspectors are not authorized to inspect domestic households, and some labor inspectors have faced obstacles, such as locked gates, or are denied entry to large farms, inhibiting their ability to identify underage workers. In countries like **Armenia** and **Ukraine**, labor inspectors

do not have the authority or lack formal approval to conduct unannounced inspections. And in **Azerbaijan** and the **Kyrgyz Republic**, a moratorium on labor inspections actively hinders labor inspections.

Even though countries may have laws on the books that prohibit the involvement of children in armed forces, several countries failed to enforce those prohibitions. For example, the Government of **Mali** used children in its armed forces in 2022 in violation of national law. In **Somalia**, there is evidence that federal and state security forces continued to recruit and use children in armed conflict in violation of national law. In addition, there is evidence of recruitment and use of children in hostilities by state armed forces in **Yemen** in contravention of Yemeni law. Other enforcement gaps also remain related to the use of children in armed conflict. For instance, in **Iraq**, government authorities inappropriately detained or punished children allegedly affiliated with ISIS—even though some of those children were victims of forcible recruitment and use in armed conflict. Further, the Armed Forces of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** provided ammunition to non-state armed groups known to recruit and use children, including using children in armed conflict.

Since enforcement is the primary challenge for most countries in this report, ILAB has developed tools and resources in addition to its research and reporting to help improve labor enforcement. For example, our ***Better Trade Tool*** links essential reporting from each of ILAB’s three flagship reports to trade data that can be used by labor inspectorates, trade policymakers, corporate compliance officers, and procurement officers to better target the enforcement of child labor laws in the production of key goods and products. (27) ***Comply Chain***, another tool that ILAB provides, lays out best practices for a due diligence system to help companies identify and mitigate child labor and forced labor risks in global production. (28) Read more about ***Comply Chain*** and its recent revamp in Box 5.

Box 5:

Comply Chain: Social Compliance Made Simple

Are you a company looking to adapt to evolving social compliance regulations, including the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA)? Whether just starting or updating established systems, *Comply Chain's* straightforward guidance works for businesses of all sizes.

Are you an industry group helping your members implement effective due diligence? *Comply Chain* is filled with examples, resources, and success stories where worker-driven social compliance practices have helped mitigate child labor and forced labor risks.

Are you a worker organization aiming to improve working conditions? *Comply Chain* highlights where worker voice can critically address child labor and forced labor.

ILAB makes social compliance simple with the click of a button. *Comply Chain: Business Tools for Labor Compliance in Global Supply Chains* helps companies address child labor and forced labor in global supply chains by providing an actionable roadmap to implement eight steps of worker-driven social compliance:

1. Engage Stakeholders and Partners
2. Assess Risks and Impacts
3. Develop a Code of Conduct
4. Communicate and Train Across Your Supply Chain
5. Monitor Compliance
6. Remediate Violations
7. Independent Review
8. Report Performance and Engagement

This year, *Comply Chain* has an improved new web design offering customized navigation, robust examples of good practices, and tailored content helping businesses remediate complex issues in social compliance. (28) New features provide information on the latest human rights due diligence laws and regulations around the world—from the U.S. to Australia—improving workers' lives and business practices in the process.

Companies seeking to comply with the UFLPA can leverage *Comply Chain* as a vital resource. The UFLPA establishes a rebuttable presumption that goods produced wholly or in part in Xinjiang, China, or produced by entities on the UFLPA Entity List, are made with forced labor and are therefore prohibited from importation into the United States. In order to overcome the presumption, importers must comply with the UFLPA Strategy "Guidance to Importers." The Guidance to Importers incorporates the key principles found in *Comply Chain*, which is also referenced in numerous U.S. Government resources to help businesses develop and strengthen robust social compliance systems to counter forced labor risks in their supply chains. (29) For example, see the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Operational Guidance for Importers and the interagency Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory. (30; 31)

Coordination

Effective coordination is a cornerstone to the eventual elimination of child labor. Coordination enables government departments and ministries to enforce laws, implement national policies and programs, and support survivors in receiving social services. This year's report, however, highlights many persistent gaps in coordination.

The major gap—as in previous years—is the inability of coordinating bodies, including mechanisms such as intergovernmental committees responsible for coordinating efforts to address child labor, to carry out their mandates. Much of this is due to insufficient funding. In other cases, it is due to a lack of capacity, insufficient staffing, and limited data to inform decision-making. As one example, in **Peru**, some regional committees for the prevention and eradication of child labor do not fulfill their mandate to create action plans to combat child labor, while others have action plans but fail to provide the necessary funding to implement them.

Challenges are also noted in coordination between those responsible for investigating child labor and those providing services. Countries in this grouping include **Namibia**, where there is a suggested action to establish a framework for communication between government ministries and civil society to facilitate the prompt referral of cases. **Azerbaijan, Kenya, Mongolia, and Zambia**, among others, face similar challenges when it comes to referrals to ensure social services for victims of child labor.

Also, there are countries with no active national coordinating mechanisms to address child labor, or that lack mechanisms in key sectors in which there is a demonstrated child labor problem. These countries include **Armenia, the Central African Republic, the**

Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Georgia, Guinea, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Tonga, and Ukraine. Similarly, **Pakistan's** child protection units lack adequate staffing and face delays in receiving funding. **Sierra Leone's** village-level and chiefdom-level child welfare committees are non-existent in some areas, and non-operational in others, despite requirements that these function as part of Sierra Leone's Child Right Act.

Policy

Policies to address child labor support governments in developing and prioritizing a roadmap to ensure that children are free from child labor, including work that harms their health, safety, and morals. This is particularly important because many children engaged in child labor are working outside the protection of the law and remain vulnerable to poor working conditions and serious occupational safety and health risks, among other concerns.

There is a continuing gap relating to the lack of publicly available information and the status of policy implementation. The lack of public information is a likely indication of inactivity or inadequate implementation of a policy. This is the case in countries such as **Costa Rica, Mauritania, and Namibia.**

Additional gaps relate to the scope of existing policies. Policies ought to respond to all child labor issues. For example, in **Comoros and Mauritius**, research found no evidence of policies that address the most pressing child labor concerns, such as the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Other countries, including **Bhutan, Gabon, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, and **Senegal**, lack any policy related to child labor. And in **India**, only 11 of the 29 states have child labor action plans.



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A Yemeni boy with a Kalashnikov assault rifle during a gathering of newly-recruited Huthi fighters in the capital Sanaa to mobilize more fighters to battlefronts in the war against pro-government forces in several Yemeni cities. Sanaa, Yemen. July 16, 2017.

Programs

Social programs can help address child labor by countering factors that both lead to and reinforce systems of poverty, which prevent children from pursuing their education and instead thrust them into work at the expense of their futures. These factors often include, but are not restricted to, limited access to social services, lack of reliable data to design impactful programs, and the outsized impact of climate change.

Caring for those impacted by child labor and trafficking is paramount. Sadly, the report notes many gaps, including the lack of adequate social services for survivors. In **Sierra Leone**, research indicates that shelter space is insufficient to accommodate all survivors of human trafficking and other vulnerable children due to inadequate funding. In **India**, certain shelter homes, including Ujjawala and Swadhar Greh, have high rates of non-registration. Due to a reported loophole in the law, if the government does not process a shelter home's registration application by a prescribed time, the organization will automatically gain licensure. Some corrupt officials purposely miss the licensing deadline to allow politically connected shelters to gain licensing. Moreover, in some instances the homes function as hostels and offer accommodations for a fee. In 2022, authorities reported multiple instances in which children ran away from these shelters because of unsafe conditions and/or alleged abuse by caretakers.

Accurate data on the prevalence and types of child labor are also essential to designing programs that effectively address child labor. However, many countries lack reliable data on child labor or have data that are outdated, non-existent, or not publicly available. Countries such as **Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Eswatini, Haiti, Comoros, Solomon Islands,** and **Uzbekistan** fall into this category.

Responding to the growing climate crisis is also an area of increased focus by countries, and

many countries, especially in Asia and Africa, are documenting the impact of climate change on child labor. In **Bangladesh** in 2022, for example, almost 20 million children were vulnerable to extreme weather, floods, river erosion, and sea-level rise. In **Nepal**, climate-related disasters have often increased child labor, particularly following the 2017 floods in the south. In **Namibia**, there was also a significant increase in the number of Angolans migrating to the country because of climate change-induced drought, which has led to emerging trends of locals hiring Angolan children as domestic workers, for street vending, and for agricultural activities. In addition, NGO and local media reporting indicate children of refugee status along the border of Namibia and Angola are increasingly recruited by criminal organizations to smuggle drugs, fuel, diamonds, and wildlife products. Deteriorating economic conditions in **Zimbabwe** and the ongoing effects of climate change (including droughts, flash floods, and crop failures) strain rural households and make children more vulnerable to child labor and commercial sexual exploitation.

Social programs can help. In **Kenya**, the government-funded social safety net program, with support from the World Bank, provided relief to 278,945 households with orphans and vulnerable children in 2022. In addition, the government allocated approximately \$11 million to respond to the drought and food crises facing Kenya's northern counties, reaching 58,000 families as of August 2022. These actions partially mitigate vulnerability to climate shock and extreme poverty that contribute to child labor in Kenya.

Climate change's impact on global stability will only increase in the absence of effective and timely action. The collective global need to transition to a clean future is urgent, but it is vital that the transition is just and supportive to workers and their families.

Figure 11 presents by region a summary analysis of government efforts and persistent challenges from this year's report.

Figure 11

Regional Analysis of Government Efforts and Challenges

REGION	EFFORTS	CHALLENGES
Indo-Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded initiatives to increase childcare and education access, specifically for children with disabilities, children living in rural areas, and other communities at high risk of child labor. Developed legal and policy initiatives to address rising online commercial sexual exploitation of children. Increased funding for cash transfers and other social protection interventions to respond to the needs of vulnerable families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of sectoral-specific information on child labor to inform policies and programs. Expired and outdated national policies to address child labor. Limited regulations identifying hazardous occupations and tasks for children under age 18.
Europe & Eurasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed new trainings and procedural guidance to strengthen criminal law enforcement officials' response to child exploitation cases, including specialized interviewing techniques and referral to social services providers. Implemented social program and policy interventions to expand education access for children living with disabilities and other underserved communities. Enacted new laws codifying procedures related to government responses to the worst forms of child labor and other forms of child exploitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaps in court procedures and training for judicial personnel resulting in frequent reclassification of child trafficking cases to lesser crimes. Restricted authority of labor inspectors to access worksites and conduct unannounced inspections. Lack of minimum age protections to cover children working outside of formal employment agreements.
Latin America & the Caribbean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased national- and municipal-level coordination to address specific challenges related to child labor within communities. Enacted new laws to increase criminal penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor. Offered criminal law enforcement officials specialized trainings related to trafficking in persons, including high risk sectors for labor exploitation and procedures for identifying child survivors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of centralized systems for criminal law enforcement agencies to collect and share data related to the worst forms of child labor. Insufficient schools, teachers, and educational resources serving rural and marginalized areas where migrant children and minority communities most frequently live. Limited information on criminal law enforcement activities, including investigations, prosecutions, and convictions.
Middle East & North Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased labor inspections, including in high-risk sectors for child labor. Launched new online resources to facilitate coordination and community awareness on human trafficking. Enacted new laws to increase penalties and strengthen protections of children from human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of enforcement and policy initiatives in rural areas and conflict zones. Lack of implementation of national policies related to trafficking in persons and other worst forms of child labor. Insufficient scope of programs and policy initiatives to address child labor beyond human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Regional Analysis of Government Efforts and Challenges *(Cont.)*

REGION	EFFORTS	CHALLENGES
South and Central Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collected new prevalence data on child labor to support programming and policy priorities. Expanded educational resources, including access to computers and other learning technologies to meet the needs of children living in rural communities. Enacted laws to protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and use in illicit activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient coordination between national and local authorities resulting in limited local-level implementation of enforcement guidelines and policy initiatives related to child labor. Low capacity of judicial and criminal law enforcement officials to interview and respond to the needs of survivors of the worst forms of child labor due to a lack of training. Resource constraints caused infrequent or no labor inspections beyond major urban centers.
Sub-Saharan Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made publicly available information about labor law enforcement efforts, including worksite inspections targeting high risk sectors for child labor. Created new government agencies mandated to coordinate efforts to address child labor. Formed partnerships with non-governmental and civil society organizations to increase monitoring of sectors at high risk for child labor and address specialized challenges, such as labor migration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited resources and authority to monitor the informal sector, leaving children working in this sector unprotected. Continued recruitment of children into armed conflict. Lack of access to birth registration and other national documentation, limiting children's access to education and social protection programs.

Call to Action

A clean-energy future is a future without child labor. And a clean industry starts with affording adult workers fundamental freedom of association and collective bargaining rights, so they can advocate for better wages and working conditions free of child labor. Eliminating child labor requires partnerships among governments, civil society, worker organizations, and businesses to create real, sustainable change: A just transition to a cleaner economy. All governments must pass and enforce strong labor laws, and protections for collective

bargaining. Workers, we need to hear your voice. Companies, we're calling on you to take supply chain transparency and due diligence seriously. If child or forced labor is in your supply chain, address it. Civil society, we need your help elevating the voices of survivors of labor exploitation on the global stage. You are often closest to the communities most vulnerable and have a unique ability to help prevent and mitigate these abuses. We call on all relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of these conditions and advocate for a just transition to a truly clean-energy future free from labor abuses.



Acting U.S. Secretary of Labor, Julie Su, meets with Department of Labor interns at the U.S. Department of Labor. Washington, D.C. July 20, 2023.

The U.S. Experience

“To all workers who are toiling in the shadows, know that we see you, we stand with you, and we will fight for you.”

Julie A. Su, Acting Secretary of Labor
March, 2023

All countries struggle with the complexity and challenges of child labor. The United States is no exception. For more than a year, the U.S. Department of Labor has been sounding the alarm on the increase in the number of children employed in violation of federal child labor laws. In fact, since 2018, we have seen a 69 percent increase in the number of minors employed illegally in the United States. Minors have been found in meatpacking plants, in construction, and at factories supplying major retail food brands.

Children are extremely vulnerable to exploitation for many reasons. They often work for subcontractors, or subcontractors of subcontractors. Multinational brands source products and services from these subcontractors but frequently claim to have no visibility into them. While governments hold ultimate responsibility for enforcing labor laws, companies need to step up, too, and no longer hide behind plausible deniability. They need to gain visibility across the breadth of their supply chains to root out abuses. This can be done, but it will take a stronger commitment from the top leadership of corporations.

Meanwhile, some U.S. states are rolling back child labor laws. As United States Solicitor of Labor Seema Nanda put it, “It is irresponsible for states to consider loosening child labor protections. Federal and state entities should be working together to increase accountability and ramp up enforcement—not make it easier to illegally hire children to do what are often dangerous jobs.”

The U.S. government has a pivotal role in protecting children and adults from labor exploitation. The Department takes these egregious violations very seriously, investigates every child labor complaint we receive, and acts to hold employers accountable. For example, in February 2023, the Department of Labor announced the resolution of one of the largest child labor cases in its history. In Kieler, Wisconsin, Packers Sanitation Services Inc., one of the nation’s largest food safety sanitation services providers, paid \$1.5 million in civil penalties after the Wage and Hour Division (WHD) found the company employed at least 102 children—from 13 to 17 years of age—in hazardous occupations and had them working overnight shifts at 13 meat processing facilities in eight states. The division found that children were working with hazardous chemicals and cleaning meat-processing equipment, including back saws, brisket saws, and head splitters.

In February 2023, the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services also announced an array of new actions to increase their efforts to thoroughly vet sponsors of migrant children, investigate child labor violations, and hold companies accountable, including:

- Creation of a Department of Labor-led interagency task force to promote further collaboration and improve information-sharing between federal agencies, and to advance the health, education, and well-being of children in the United States;
- Implementation of a national strategic enforcement initiative on child labor in which WHD will use data-driven, worker-focused strategies to initiate investigations where child labor violations are most likely to occur;
- Increased scrutiny of companies and subcontractors using illegal child labor to increase corporate accountability for systematic abuses of child labor laws;
- A call on Congress for increased funding for the Department of Labor’s enforcement agencies, and to increase civil money penalties for companies that use child labor;
- And *more*.

In July 2023, the U.S. Department of Labor and its partners from the Interagency Task Force to Combat Child Labor Exploitation announced *recent actions* to hold companies accountable for violating federal child labor laws.

This included enhanced child labor enforcement efforts from the Wage and Hour Division. Between October 1, 2022 and July 20, 2023, as a result of this stepped-up enforcement, the agency concluded 765 child labor cases finding 4,474 children employed in violation of federal child labor laws and assessed employers with more than \$6.6 million in penalties. These cases reflect a 44 percent increase in children found employed in violation of federal law and an 87 percent increase in penalties assessed from the same time period in the previous fiscal year. In addition,

the agency announced it was pursuing more than 700 open child labor cases. This enforcement data demonstrates the department’s commitment to identifying and addressing the child labor violations more aggressively than in the department’s history.

In efforts to tackle child labor, WHD enforces regulations on legal working age, permissible hours of work, earned wages, and hazardous occupation prohibitions for minor employees. WHD investigators across the country conduct inspections at workplaces to ensure that labor laws are enforced and working conditions are fair. Many investigations also take place in industries that employ workers vulnerable to labor trafficking. As a result, WHD is often the first federal agency to identify cases of trafficking in persons and refer these cases to criminal law enforcement agencies. Through its *YouthRules!* initiative, WHD also provides information to young workers, parents, educators, and employers to safeguard the rights of workers under the age of 18 and help ensure that children’s work experiences are legal, safe, and do not disrupt their education. (32) Learn more in Figure 12.

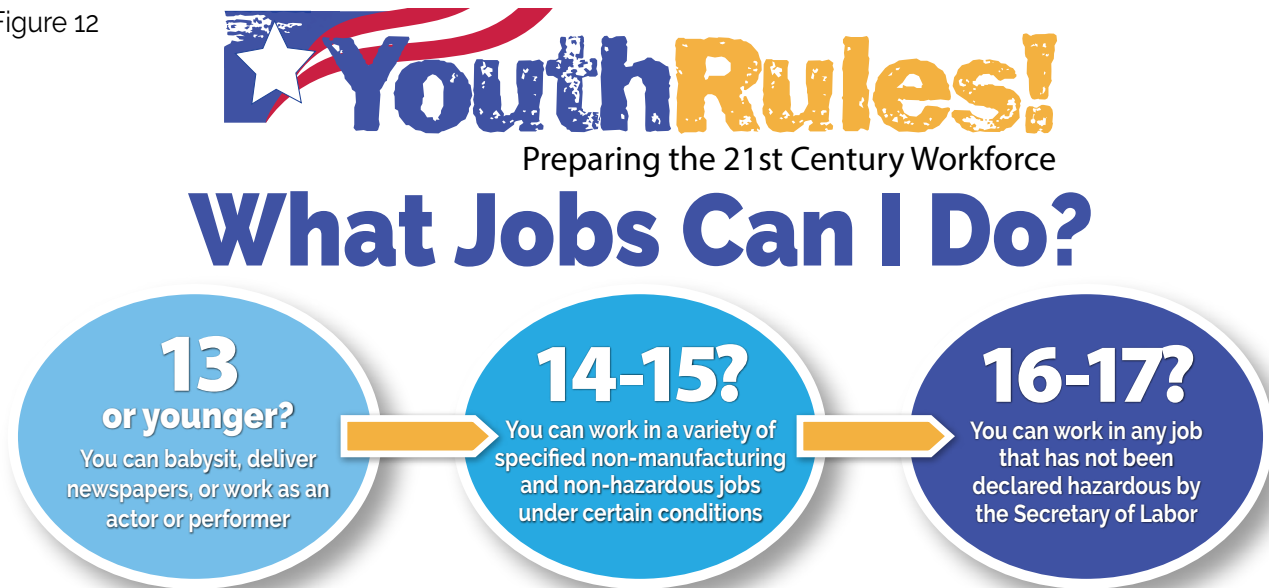
The Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) ensures safe and healthy working conditions by setting standards to reduce and eliminate workplace hazards.

Finally, the Department’s Bureau of Labor Statistics measures labor market activity, working conditions, price changes, and production in the U.S. economy to support private and public decision-making. The Bureau of Labor Statistics also conducts research and publishes reports on youth employment trends.

The Federal Minimum Ages for Work

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) guarantees basic rights and protections to ensure the safety and well-being of child workers. The child labor regulations of the FLSA are designed to ensure children’s educational opportunities are not harmed by early

Figure 12



For more information on the specific jobs you can and can't do, visit www.youthrules.gov/know-the-limits

To Find Out More: Visit youthrules.dol.gov or Call 1-866-4US-WAGE

employment and to prohibit children's employment in jobs that are detrimental to their health and safety.

The FLSA and its implementing regulations have established the following standards:

Non-Agricultural Work

- A minimum age of 14 for light work in non-agricultural industries, with limits on the times of day, number of hours, and tasks that can be performed by 14- and 15-year-olds. (33; 34)
- A minimum age of 16 for most employment in non-hazardous, non-agricultural industries. (33)
- A minimum age of 18 for employment in hazardous occupations as deemed by the Department's issuance of 17 non-agricultural Hazardous Occupations Orders. (33; 34)

Agricultural Work

- A minimum age of 14 for agricultural work outside of school hours, without limits on permitted occupations (other than hazardous work limits) or the number of hours such children may work. (33) A minimum age of 12-14 for non-hazardous

agricultural work outside of school hours with the consent of a parent employed on the same farm. No minimum age for children in non-hazardous agricultural work outside of school hours with the consent of their parents on farms that use less than 500 man-days of agricultural labor in any calendar quarter.

- A minimum age of 16 for agricultural employment in hazardous occupations, as identified by the Department of Labor, except for children employed by a parent on a farm operated by the parent. (33; 34)

All states have child labor standards and mandatory school attendance laws. When state and federal child labor standards differ, the rule that provides the most protections for the young worker is the one that must be followed.

According to Department of Labor records, there were 2,243,000 youth, ages 16 to 17, employed in the United States in 2021, and 2,463,000 employed in 2022. Despite the restrictions and limitations placed on youth work, there were 17 fatal occupational injuries in the United States among youth ages 16

to 17, and 7 fatal occupational injuries among youth below the age of 16 in 2021 (the most recent year for which data are available).

Wage and Hour Division

The Wage and Hour Division determines an employer's status of compliance with the FLSA's child labor regulations in every investigation conducted. Learn more in Figure 13.

For example, a WHD investigation found Dunkin's franchise locations in Maryland and West Virginia allowed 19 minors to work in violation of child labor laws, leading the employer to accept responsibility for the offenses and to sign an agreement with the Department of Labor to prevent future violations at its eight locations in three states. The employer also paid a fine of \$41,181 to resolve the violations. In Salt Lake City, Utah, a federal investigation found Specialty Consulting Services LLC, a restaurant supply company, allowed 22 employees—ages 14 and 15—to work as many as 46 hours per workweek, and to begin work after midnight—both illegal practices under child labor laws. The company was assessed \$16,595 in penalties to resolve the child labor violations. And in Dundee, Ohio, a lathe mill paid an enhanced child labor enforcement penalty of \$22,093 after federal investigators found the company employed a 15-year-old worker illegally in a hazardous occupation—the operation of a sawmill—which led the worker to suffer injury when he became entangled in the gears of a powered wood-processing machine.

In addition to its rigorous enforcement efforts, WHD aims to prevent violations from occurring in the first place by educating employers, workers, and the public about federal child labor law compliance. For example, the agency's Southeast Regional Office hosted a webinar in April 2023 that featured training on child labor rules and a panel discussion with stakeholders, including state officials and school and industry representatives. In May 2023, WHD's Southwest Regional Office hosted a 2-day Department of Labor forum that included a child labor and

workplace safety panel discussion featuring WHD and OSHA officials.

WHD online resources include fact sheets, FAQs, on-demand video training, PowerPoint presentations, and extensive information on all laws enforced by the agency, including a comprehensive child labor webpage to help parents, educators, young workers, and employers better understand federal child labor laws. (35; 36)

The agency also provides a free Timesheet App in English and Spanish for Android and Apple mobile device users that allows employers and employees to track their hours of work and calculate wages due. (37) The app can empower young workers to ensure they are receiving the wages they are due or get assistance if a dispute arises.

Employment and Training Administration

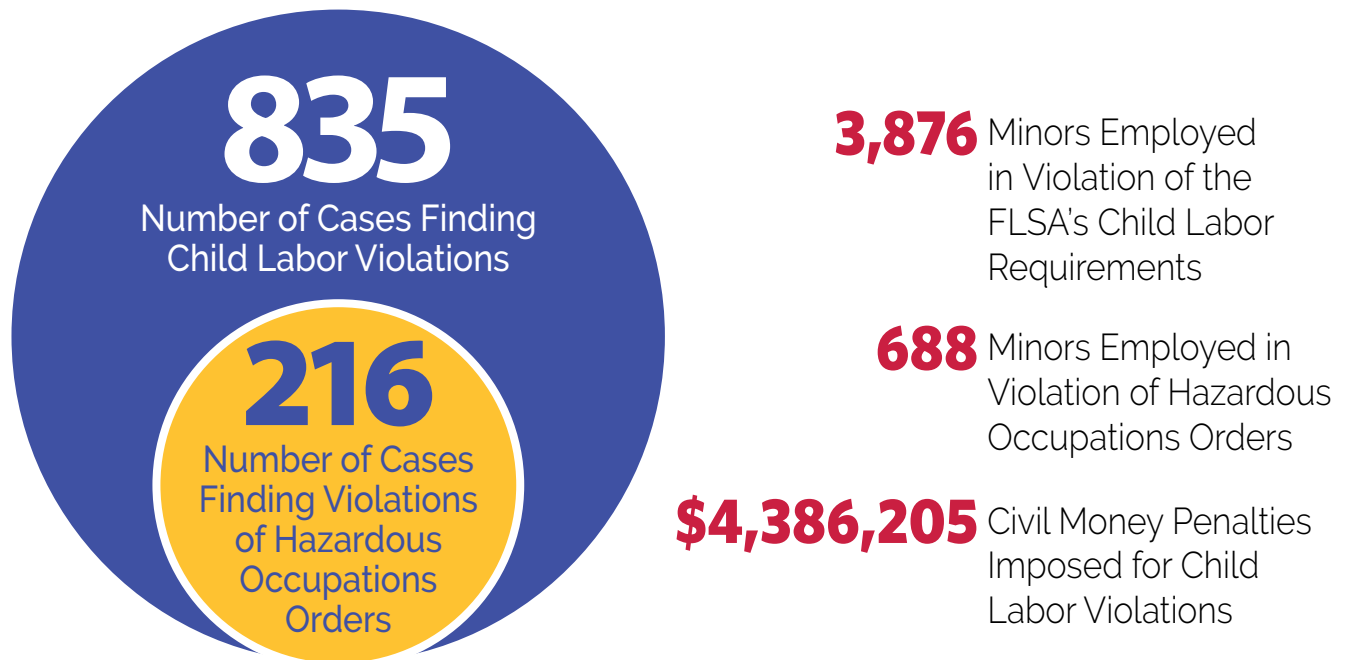
The Department's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) provides workforce training and development programs to remove barriers to good jobs and improve economic mobility for all Americans. ETA programs include Registered Apprenticeship Programs, YouthBuild, Job Corps, Reentry Employment Opportunities, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Youth Formula Program. These programs seek to empower historically disadvantaged populations, including women, people of color, and youth, by providing them with work-ready skills and pathways to industry accreditation.

In 2023, ETA awarded more than \$90 million in YouthBuild grants to provide youth ages 16 to 24 with education and training to expand the clean-energy workforce. These grants will teach young adults who are not currently in school or in the workforce in-demand construction skills focused on green building techniques, including weatherization processes, use of sustainable building materials, and solar panel installation. Also in 2023, ETA awarded

Figure 13

Wage and Hour Division Rigorously Enforces the Fair Labor Standards Act, Including Child Labor Laws

Fiscal Year 2022 Enforcement Data



More specific information about each of these cases can be found in the WHD's enforcement database at dol.gov/DataEnforcement and WHD's website at dol.gov/WHDFiscalYearData.

\$33 million in Growth Opportunities grants (part of the Reentry Employment Opportunities Program) for career exploration, job training, paid-work experiences, conflict resolution skills, mentorship, and supportive services to justice-involved young people.

Conclusion

The child labor problem in the U.S. shows we are not immune to challenges that other countries also face. But our response shows that we at the U.S.

Department of Labor are committed to turning the tide. Others need to step up. Corporations need to be vigilant to root out child labor in their own operations as well as in their supply chains, no matter how far down the chain it goes. Union leaders need to have their voices heard when they call for an end to exploitative labor. Front-line human rights defenders—such as the press—need to keep exposing these abuses through their reporting. With concerted effort, we can protect more children and punish more unscrupulous employers for all violations occurring on their watch.

About the Iqbal Masih Award



The United States Congress established the Iqbal Masih Award for the Elimination of Child Labor in 2008 to recognize exceptional efforts by an individual, company, organization, or national government to end the worst forms of child labor. The award reflects the spirit of Iqbal Masih, a Pakistani child sold into bonded labor as a carpet weaver at age 4. He escaped his servitude at age 10 and became an outspoken advocate of children's rights, drawing international attention to his fight against child labor. Iqbal was killed in Pakistan in 1995 at the age of 12, as he continued to call for an end to child labor. Further information about the Iqbal Masih Award and USDOL's efforts to combat child labor is available on the USDOL website at www.dol.gov/Iqbal.

In 2023, Acting U.S. Secretary of Labor Julie Su selected Lalitha Natarajan, an activist and advocate working in India, to receive the Iqbal Masih Award in recognition of her extraordinary efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor.

Lalitha Natarajan

Lalitha Natarajan has championed the cause to end child labor and modern slavery as an activist and ally for vulnerable communities in India for over 20 years. She has dedicated her career to rescuing children from forced labor across the state of Tamil Nadu, including from stone quarries and food processing factories. Lalitha has worked with NGOs and international human rights agencies, helping public officials enhance child laborer rescue and

rehabilitation programming. She has also served as a human rights interlocuter on legal and empowerment training programs serving women, children, and marginalized caste members. Since embarking on her legal career in 2015, she has focused on issues pertaining to women's and children's rights. Lalitha has fought cases for individuals and families who have suffered from bonded labor where there is little or no recourse to legal aid. In the face of repeated harassment and threats, Lalitha continues to advocate for children's rights and fights to bring child rights offenders to justice.





World Day Against Child Labor
 Through the Kenya Schoolhouse Program, children were given the platform to express concerns about forms of child labor that exist within their county of Bungoma and their country of Kenya. Children created art depicting child labor and participated in a processional walk.



Appendix 1

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AF	Sub-Saharan Africa
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
CEACR	International Labor Organization Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
EAPCCO	Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
EUR	Europe and Eurasia
FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labor Organization
ILO C. 29	International Labor Organization Convention No. 29: Convention Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor, commonly known as the "Forced Labor Convention"
ILO C. 138	International Labor Organization Convention No. 138: Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, commonly referred to as the "Minimum Age Convention"
ILO C. 182	International Labor Organization Convention No. 182: Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, commonly referred to as the "Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention"
ILO R. 190	International Labor Organization Recommendation No. 190: Recommendation Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, commonly referred to as the "Worst Forms of Child Labor Recommendation"
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Indo-Pacific
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LFS	Labor Force Survey

LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Survey
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MERCOSUR	Common Market of the South (America); full members include Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela (membership currently suspended)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Palermo	Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIMPOC	Statistical Information and Monitoring Program on Child Labor
TDA	Trade and Development Act
TVPRA	Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act
UCW	Understanding Children's Work
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USDOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
USDOL	U.S. Department of Labor
USDOS	U.S. Department of State
USHHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
WFP	World Food Program
WHD	Wage and Hour Division
WHO	World Health Organization



© Godong/Alamy

A Mexican teen artist works on wooden sculptures. Yucatan, Mexico. October 7, 2017.

Appendix 2

Definitions Related to Child Labor and Forced Labor

Definitions related to child labor are guided by ILO C. 138 on Minimum Age and ILO C. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. ILO's Resolution Concerning Statistics of Child Labor, developed during the 18th International Conference of Labor Statisticians (ICLS), and amendments made during the 20th ICLS provide the international framework for measuring children's work. See Appendix 7 for additional definitions.

Working Children

Per the Resolution Concerning Statistics of Child Labor developed during the 18th ICLS, working children are those engaged in any productive activity for at least 1 hour during the reference period. Productive activity includes market production and certain types of non-market production, principally the production of goods and services for their families' use. The 20th ICLS introduced changes to the definition of working children to align that definition with internationally accepted definitions of work for adults. The new definition classifies working children as those engaged in any activity to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for their own use. In summary, the new definition includes the production of additional types of services for family use, unpaid trainee work by children, volunteer work by children, and other work activities by children. Since most countries are in the process of adapting survey instruments to reflect this new definition, the definition of working children from the 18th ICLS Resolution has been used in this report. The work that children perform may be within the formal or informal economy, inside or outside of family settings, whether paid or unpaid. This includes children working in domestic service outside the child's own household for an employer, paid or unpaid. (38; 39)

Child Labor

Child labor is a subset of working children and is work below the minimum age for work, as established in national legislation that conforms to international standards. The definition includes the worst forms of child labor. Child labor is a subset of working children because child labor excludes children who work limited hours per week in permitted light work and those who are above the minimum age who engage in work not classified as a worst form of child labor. (38; 39)

Worst Forms of Child Labor

The term "worst forms of child labor" refers to activities described and as understood in ILO C. 182. (6) Under Article 3 of the Convention, the worst forms of child labor comprise the following activities:

- All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- The use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography, or for pornographic purposes;
- The use, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; and
- Work which, by its nature or the circumstances under which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.

Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor

For this report, the term "categorical worst forms of child labor" refers to child labor understood as the

worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182. This category does not include the worst forms of child labor identified under Article 3(d) as “hazardous work.” (6)

Hazardous Work

The term “hazardous work” refers to the worst form of child labor identified in ILO C. 182, Article 3(d), “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.” ILO C. 182, Article 4, directs countries to consult with employers and workers to identify the types of hazardous work that should be prohibited by law or regulation. Hazardous work lists may describe specific activities, occupations, industries, or conditions. (6)

Forced Labor

Forced labor, under international standards, is defined as all work or service that is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the worker does not offer themselves voluntarily. (40) Menace of penalty refers to the means of coercion and includes threats or violence against workers or workers’ families and close associates; restrictions on workers’ movement; debt bondage; withholding of wages or promised benefits; withholding of documents; and abuse of workers’ vulnerability through the denial of rights or threats of dismissal or deportation. (41) “Circumstances that may give rise to involuntary work, when undertaken under deception or uninformed, include, inter alia, unfree recruitment at birth or through transactions such as slavery or bonded labor; situations in which the worker must perform a job of a different nature from that specified during recruitment without [their] consent; abusive requirements for overtime or on-call work that were not previously agreed to with the employer; work in hazardous conditions to

which the worker has not consented, with or without compensation or protective equipment; work with very low or no wages; in degrading living conditions imposed by the employer; work for other employers than agreed to; work for a longer period of time than agreed to; and work with no or limited freedom to terminate the work contract.” (41)

Slavery and Practices Similar to Slavery

Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised. (42) Practices similar to slavery include the following practices:

- Debt bondage, defined as the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of their personal services or the services of a person under their control as security for a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined;
- Serfdom, defined as the condition or status of a tenant who is by law, custom, or agreement bound to live and labor on land belonging to another person and to render some determinate service to such other person, whether for reward or not, and is not free to change their own status; and
- Forced or compulsory labor. (43)

Forced Child Labor

Forced child labor is a categorical worst form of child labor under ILO C. 182. (4) Children are in forced child labor if subjected to work under the threat or menace of penalty. Forced child labor also includes work performed with or for the child’s parents for a third party under the threat or menace of any penalty directly applied to the child or parents. (6; 41; 44)

Appendix 3

ILO Instruments Related to Child Labor and Forced Labor

The ILO brings together government, employer, and worker representatives of member states to establish and supervise the implementation of international labor standards and develop policies and implement programs to advance decent work. (45) International labor standards are legal instruments drawn up by these ILO constituents that set out basic principles and rights at work. They can take the form of either conventions, protocols, or recommendations. Conventions and protocols are international treaties that are legally binding on ratifying member states. Ratifying countries commit themselves to implementing the convention or protocol in national law and practice, and reporting on its application at regular intervals. Recommendations are non-binding and provide guidelines for action, either as a complement to a convention or as a stand-alone instrument. The following paragraphs describe key ILO instruments related to child labor and the minimum ages set by countries related to these instruments.

ILO Convention No. 138: Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973

ILO C. 138 establishes that the minimum age of admission into employment or work in any occupation “shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling, and, in any case, shall not be less than fifteen” (Article 2(3)). Countries whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may initially specify a minimum legal working age of 14 when ratifying the Convention. In addition, Article 7(1) says that national laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of children ages 13 to 15 years for light work. Countries that specify a minimum legal working age of 14 may permit light work for children ages 12 to 14. (46)

ILO Convention No. 182: Worst Forms of Child Labor, 1999

ILO C. 182 defines the worst forms of child labor and requires ratifying countries to take immediate action to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor for persons under age 18.

Among other actions, ILO C. 182 requires ratifying countries to take effective and timebound measures to prevent the engagement of children in the worst forms of child labor; help remove children from the worst forms of child labor and provide for their rehabilitation and social integration; ensure that children removed from the worst forms of child labor have access to free basic education and, wherever possible and appropriate, vocational training; identify and reach out to children at special risk; take into account the special situation of girls; consult with employer and worker organizations to create appropriate mechanisms to monitor implementation of the convention; and assist one another in implementing the convention. (6)

Worst Forms of Child Labor Recommendation No. 190, 1999

Recommendation No. 190 supplements ILO C. 182 and provides non-binding practical guidance in applying the Convention. Among other provisions, it includes a list of working conditions and types of work that should be considered when determining what comprises hazardous work. (47)

ILO Convention No. 29: Forced Labor, 1930

ILO C. 29 prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, which is defined as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily.” (40)

ILO Convention No. 105: Abolition of Forced Labor Convention, 1957

ILO C. 105 prohibits forced or compulsory labor as a means of political coercion or education, or as a punishment for holding or expressing political views or views ideologically opposed to the established political, social, or economic system; as a method of mobilizing and using labor for economic development; as a means of labor discipline; as a punishment for having participated in strikes; and as a means of racial, social, national, or religious discrimination. (48)

Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, 1930

The Protocol reaffirms the forced labor definition in ILO C. 29. It requires ratifying countries to take effective measures to prevent and eliminate forced and compulsory labor, to sanction perpetrators, and provide victims with protection and access to appropriate remedies, such as compensation. It also requires ratifying countries to develop a national policy and plan of action to address forced

or compulsory labor in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations. (78) The Protocol supplements ILO C. 29; as such, only ILO member states that have ratified the convention can ratify the protocol. (49)

Forced Labor (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation No. 203, 2014

Recommendation No. 203 provides non-binding practical guidance in the areas of prevention, protection of victims and ensuring their access to justice and remedies, enforcement, and international cooperation. It supplements both the protocol and the convention. (50)

ILO Convention No. 81: Labor Inspection Convention, 1947

ILO C. 81 establishes the duties, functions, and responsibilities of countries' labor inspection systems and labor inspectors. These functions include enforcing legal provisions related to general conditions of work and worker protection in all workplaces as defined by national laws or regulations. (51)



Appendix 4

How to Read a TDA Country Profile

● **Country Overview.** Each country profile begins with a single-paragraph overview of 2022 and a statement identifying the assessment level assigned to the country for 2022. Following the assessment statement, the paragraph offers a summary of key findings, including any meaningful efforts made (defined as efforts in key areas where the government advanced its commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor); the most common or egregious forms of child labor found in the country; and highlights of those areas in which key gaps in government efforts remain.

● **Section I: Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor.** The first section of each country profile attempts to provide, to the extent that information is available, a comprehensive picture of the worst forms of child labor in the country.

● **Table 1, Statistics on Children's Work and Education,** contains at least four variables: percentage of working children, school attendance rate, percentage of children combining work and school, and primary completion rate. Most country profiles have data for at least one of these variables. A smaller set of profiles contains data on children's work by sector. The age and methodologies of the original surveys that provide the underlying data vary, and in some cases, the surveys may not reflect the true magnitude of the child labor problem in the country.

● **Table 2, Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity,** groups types of children's work by sector, using categories established by the ILO and Understanding Children's Work for national child labor surveys (Agriculture, Industry, and Services), and a fourth category intended to capture work understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182, referred to in the report as "Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor." Sectors and specific activities performed by children are sorted into these categories according to internationally accepted industry and occupational codes.

● The first table note identifies sectors or activities determined to be hazardous by national law or regulation as understood under Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182, and the second table note provides the definition of Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor.

● The table is followed by a narrative highlighting additional sector-specific information and social, economic, or political issues that affect the prevalence of child labor, such as barriers to accessing education, or major socio-economic shocks to the country that may inhibit the government's ability to address child labor, such as a natural disaster or armed conflict.

In 2022, Mexico made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government approved the ratification of the International Labor Organization's Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention and increased the number of municipal-level bodies responsible for coordinating efforts to address child labor. In addition, the government's Benito Juárez Wellbeing National Scholarship Program reached 1.2 million more students in 2022 than in 2021. However, children in Mexico are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the production of chile peppers, coffee, sugarcane, and tomatoes. Although 55.2 percent of all employment in Mexico occurs in the informal sector, federal and some state-level labor inspectors carry out inspections in that sector only after receiving formal complaints. Further, the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare does not have an internal system to track cases of child labor violations, and the 529 federal labor inspectors in the country are likely insufficient to cover the country's more than 57 million workers. Criminal law enforcement agencies also lack human and financial resources, and social programs to prevent and eliminate child labor are insufficient.



Mexico

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

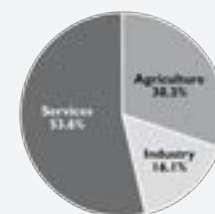
Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mexico.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.0 (866,293)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), Encuesta Nacional de Trabajo Infantil, 2019. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working in agriculture,† including in the production of avocados, beans, chile peppers, coffee, cotton, cucumbers, eggplants, beans (green), guavas, melons, nuts, onions, pineapples, sugarcane, tobacco,† and tomatoes (3-12) Cattle raising (12,13) Packing shrimp (12)
Industry	Manufacturing† footwear, garments, leather goods, and textiles (2,5,13-15) Producing baked goods (16,17) Construction,† activities unknown (2,12,13) Mining,† including amber and coal (2,12,13,18-21) Loading wood and working in carpentry workshops (12)
Services	Street work† as vendors, shoe shiners, beggars, car washers, and porters (3,12,16,22-24) Working in auto repair garages and bars† (2,5,12)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.
‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

● Children's work in agriculture often includes long working hours, use of sharp tools, handling pesticides, and carrying heavy loads. (4,45,46) Indigenous children, migrant children, and those working in agriculture are particularly vulnerable to child labor. (26,31,32,47,48) Children from indigenous populations are more likely to work across all sectors, including in agriculture, than non-indigenous children. (31,49,50) Indigenous children are also less likely to attend school due to the lack of schools near their homes, educational materials, and instruction in native languages. (51,52)

Section II: Legal Framework for Child Labor. The second section indicates whether a country has ratified key international instruments related to child labor and assesses whether a country's legal framework meets international standards. This section begins with a statement about the extent to which the government has ratified key international conventions concerning child labor.

Table 3, Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor, lists the relevant UN conventions concerning child labor. A checkmark indicates the country's ratification, acceptance, or accession to the instrument, considering that the latter two actions have the same practical legal effect regarding the substantive obligations of the instrument as ratification. If other relevant international instruments, beyond those listed in the table, were ratified during the reporting period, this may be recognized in a short narrative following the table.

A statement above **Table 4, Laws and Regulations on Child Labor,** indicates whether the government's laws and regulations related to child labor meet ILO C. 138 and C. 182, or whether gaps exist in the legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor.

Table 4 lists each of the relevant legal standards and notes which laws meet and do not meet international standards. Notes under Table 4 identify whether a government does not use conscription for military service, whether a government does not have a standing military, and whether an age is calculated based on available information.

The table is followed by a narrative describing any relevant laws that the government enacted or advanced to a significant step in the legislative process during the reporting period. The narrative also discusses why existing laws do not meet international standards.




Section III: Enforcement of Laws on Child Labor. The third section describes the roles of government agencies in enforcing laws related to child labor and reports on efforts made during the reporting period. It begins with a statement about whether the government has established institutional mechanisms to enforce laws and regulations on child labor and notes whether gaps exist within the authority or operations of the ministries responsible for law enforcement.

Table 5, Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement, lists the agencies charged with enforcing such laws, identifies each agency's role, and describes gaps in agency responsibilities or new information during the reporting period. A table note identifies whether an agency responsible for child labor enforcement was created during the reporting period.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mexico has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government ratified the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, 1930 on November 10, 2022. (65)

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 123 of the Constitution; Article 22 bis of the Labor Code; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents; Article 6 of the General Education Law (66-69)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 23 and 175 of the Labor Code (69)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 175 and 176 of the Labor Code (69)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1 and 5 of the Constitution; Articles 11, 12, and 22 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (65-67,70)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 10 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (67,70)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 200–205-Bis of the Federal Penal Code; Articles 13 and 18 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (67,70,71)

In 2022, the Mexican Senate revised the Military Service Law to remove the exception that allowed children aged 16 and 17 to enroll in voluntary state military service. (73-76) In April 2022, Mexico also amended the Labor Code to allow children as young as age 15 to work in some forms of agricultural employment. Previously, all work in agriculture was considered hazardous; under the new provision, only work using chemicals, handling machinery, operating heavy machinery, and determined by the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS) is considered hazardous. (69,77-79) In addition, as the minimum age for work at age 15 is lower than the compulsory education age of 18, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (78,80)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Secretariat for Labor and Social Welfare (STPS)	Leads efforts to enforce child labor laws, conduct labor inspections, and refer cases for investigation. (69,81-86) The STPS inspectorate is responsible for labor law enforcement in 22 industrial sectors under federal jurisdiction, including the sugar and tobacco industries, three types of enterprises, and labor matters affecting two or more states. The state-level labor inspectorates are responsible for labor law enforcement in all other situations. (66,69,87) Federal and state labor inspectorates carry out labor inspections in formally registered businesses. (81,82,88,89) The Federal Attorney for the Defense of Labor (PROFEDET), a decentralized unit of STPS, receives and prosecutes labor rights violations, including cases involving workers under age 18. (12)
Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (FGR)	Prosecutes crimes involving human trafficking, including those considered as categorical worst forms of child labor, such as human trafficking. (72,90) The FGR's Specialized Unit for Crimes against Women and Trafficking in Persons (FEVIMTRA) and the Specialized Unit on Trafficking in Minors, People, and Organs (UEITMPO) are responsible for investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases at the federal level, while the Specialized Office for Organized Crime (FEMDO) investigates and prosecutes cases linked to commercial sexual exploitation of children. (12,26,75,86,91-93) In addition, all 32 states have specialized trafficking in persons prosecutors or units, which are responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking at the state level. (93-96) Federal and state trafficking in persons units also receive some cases of child trafficking from the National Institute of Migration and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance. (97,98)

Table 6, Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor. provides information on labor law enforcement data from the current and previous reporting years, including information about the labor inspectorate's financial and human resources, authority to conduct inspections and assess penalties, and actions and mechanisms to enforce labor laws.

Table 7, Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor. provides information on criminal law enforcement data from the current and previous reporting years, including information about actions and mechanisms to enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor.

Notes under each table identify whether the data included in the tables fall outside of the calendar year. A narrative follows each of these tables with more specific information on government mechanisms and efforts and includes findings for which ILAB concludes that government efforts fall short.

Section IV: Coordination of Government Efforts on Child Labor. The fourth section provides information on the key institution charged with coordinating efforts related to child labor. It begins with a statement indicating whether the government has established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, and whether any gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor.

Table 8, Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor. lists the country's key coordinating body and its composition, if known, including its respective mandate, as well as its efforts during the reporting period. A table note states whether the mechanism was created during the reporting period.

Section V: Government Policies on Child Labor. The fifth section describes a country's policies and plans to address child labor and the development of policies that explicitly incorporate the issue of child labor. It begins with a statement indicating whether the government has established policies related to child labor, and whether policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Mexico took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of STPS that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of unannounced inspections being conducted in all sectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,536,366 (9)	\$1,658,234 (12,99)
Number of Labor Inspectors	471 (9)	529 (12)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (89)	Yes (89)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	35,098† (9)	38,337† ‡ (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	2† (9)	0† (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	2† (9)	N/A† (12)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (9)	Unknown (12)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (89)	Yes (89)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9,100)	Yes (12)

† Data are for federal inspectorate only. (9,12)
‡ Data are from January 1, 2022, to October 31, 2022. (12)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Number of Investigations	484† (110)	383 (12,111)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (9)	27 (12)
Number of Convictions	42‡ (56)	25 (12)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (56,112)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (12)

† Data are from January 1, 2021, to July 31, 2021. (110)
‡ Data reported may not be complete. (56)

The Specialized Unit for Crimes against Women and Trafficking in Persons (*FEVIMTRA*) and Mexico's National Guard participated in trainings on child trafficking and other crimes against children, including some aimed at identifying commercial sexual exploitation cases. (12) However, reports indicate that the lack of training for criminal law enforcement officers on how to perform prosecutorial and police investigative functions hampered their ability to adequately investigate and prosecute cases involving child labor. (9,26,56,110,113,114)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including low levels of participation by state authorities in coordinating mechanisms.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Inter-Institutional Commission for Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Workers of the Permitted Age in Mexico (CITI)	Coordinates Mexico's activities to develop policies, approve programs, and monitor and evaluate efforts to eliminate child labor. Meets on a quarterly basis, chaired by STPS, and includes representatives from the secretariats of the Interior, Economy, Foreign Affairs, Wellbeing, Agriculture, Transportation, Education, Health, Tourism, Social Security, System for Integral Family Development (SNDFI), and FGR, and NGO networks and international technical and financial partners, such as ILO, UNODC, IOM, and academia. (12,100) There are also state level (CITI Estatales) and municipal-level committees through a National Network of Local Commissions for Preventing and Eradicating Child Labor and Protecting Adolescent Workers (CITIs Network). However, some states do not have active CITI committees, and only about half of the 32 states engaged with CITI at the federal level. (12) In addition, of the active state CITIs, only the state CITIs of Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Jalisco, and the State of Mexico reported on their activities during the reporting period. (9,12) CITI also began implementing its Plan of Action on Child Labor 2021–2024. (9,100,104) Although this plan requires the CITI Secretariat to conduct monitoring activities on a quarterly basis, it lacks an accompanying budget for activities. (118,119)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

● **Table 9, Key Policies Related to Child Labor.** lists the country's key policies and provides a description of each policy's objectives and any developments in implementation, to the extent known, that occurred during the reporting period. Table notes identify policies that were approved during the reporting period and whether there are additional small-scale policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.

● The narrative following the table includes findings related to whether existing policies sufficiently address child labor issues in the country.

● **Section VI: Social Programs to Address Child Labor.** The sixth section describes social programs launched or implemented during the reporting period that focus on child labor. It begins with a statement as to whether the government funded or participated in social programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, and whether gaps exist in these social programs.

● **Table 10, Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor.** lists the country's key social programs and descriptions, including its activities and accomplishments, to the extent known, during the reporting period. Where possible, programs are hyperlinked to project websites for additional information. Table notes identify social programs that are funded by the government or were launched during the reporting period, and whether the government had additional small-scale social programs with the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.

● The narrative following the table may include an analysis of the extent to which social programs were sufficient to address the scope of child labor or covered the key sectors in which children are known to work in the country. Not all country profiles will have a paragraph after Table 10.

● **Section VII: Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor.** Table 11, *Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor*, includes a list of suggested actions for the country to consider taking to advance the elimination of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Program for the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (2020–2024)	Seeks to strengthen worker rights in Mexico and increase the participation of workers in the formal sector. (12) The program prioritizes addressing child labor as part of STPS's social inclusion strategy. (120) In 2022, STPS, in collaboration with Save the Children, trained 44 civil servants from the state government of Aguascalientes on child labor issues. (12,121)
National Program for Children and Adolescents (PRONAPPINA) (2021–2024)	Aims to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents by establishing mechanisms to support their growth and development. (12,122) In February 2022, the government launched an action plan to accompany PRONAPPINA. (123) In addition, under this program, the government published the Strategy for the Prevention of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and delivered a technical training to develop indicators on the rights of children and adolescents. (12,124)
National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (PNTdP)† (2022–2024)	Guides the work of the Inter-agency Commission to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Crimes on Human Trafficking and for the Protection and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking, under the General Law on Human Trafficking. (125) Published by the Secretariat of the Interior (SEGOB) in December 2022, this program delineates the Government of Mexico's public policy on human trafficking, in alignment with the National Development Plan 2019–2024. (9,12,126) Thirteen federal government agencies, including SEGOB, STPS, and the Secretariat of Tourism, are responsible for implementing the plan. (125) PNTdP has five key objectives: (1) promoting amendments to the legal framework on human trafficking at the federal level, (2) outlining coordination efforts on human trafficking at the national level, (3) strengthening services to survivors of human trafficking, (4) promoting research to inform actions and public policies, and (5) promoting the human rights of survivors of human trafficking. (125)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (127)

● Although the government has policies to address some of the worst forms of child labor, research could not confirm whether there is a policy to address the use of children in illicit activities. (100,120,128)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

The government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including a lack of programs to address child labor in all sectors and in all states.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Benito Juarez Wellbeing National Scholarship Program†	A \$39.3 million Secretariat of Public Education cash transfer program that offers scholarships for families living in poverty and students at risk of school desertion. The Wellbeing Basic Education Family Scholarship provides bimonthly payments of \$92 per household for all children under age 15 enrolled in school, while the Benito Juarez Scholarship provides bimonthly payments of \$92 to each child enrolled in high school. (129-131) Although the program reached 11 million students in 2022, it has been criticized for providing insufficient cash transfers, lacking monitoring and evaluation, and having implementation issues. (132-137)
Education Programs‡	Managed by the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous Education Support Program (PAEI) promotes access to public education for children and adolescents from indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities through scholarships, lodging, and nutritional assistance. (138) With funding close to \$87 million, the program helped 80,607 students in 2022. (138) However, during the reporting period, the government eliminated the Indigenous People's Education Diversity Program, the Educational Program for Migrant School Population, and the Full-Time Schools Program. (9,139-141) The termination of the Full-Time Schools Program impacted 3.6 million students. Starting in April 2022, due to advocacy and legal action by parents, civil society organizations, and state-level authorities, Secretariat of Public Education expanded the scope of The School is Ours (LEEN) program from its initial focus on building and improving educational infrastructure to also include an extended school schedule and meal services. (139,142-144)
Assistance for At-Risk Children and Adolescents Program (PAMAR)†	Implemented by SNDIF at the state and municipal levels to assist youth at risk for child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and in illicit activities, by providing shelters, psychosocial assistance, and training. (9,56) Research could not confirm whether the program was active in all states and municipalities where the program is needed.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Mexico.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (12,48,100,145-147)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mexico (Table 11).



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Zawahir, age 7, is a refugee from Yemen at Caritas Education Center, which had just reopened its doors to students. Obock, Djibouti. July 13, 2015.

Appendix 5

TDA Country Assessment Criteria

Each country in this report receives an assessment to indicate the USDOL's findings on the country's level of advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor during the reporting period. There are five possible assessment levels: Significant Advancement, Moderate Advancement, Minimal Advancement, No Advancement, or No Assessment.

Significant Advancement

For a country to be assessed as having significantly advanced efforts in 2022, the country must have (1)

instituted the minimum requirements related to laws and regulations, mechanisms, and programs to address and prevent the worst forms of child labor (see Exhibit 1); and (2) during the reporting period, made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas covering laws and regulations, enforcement, coordination, policies, and social programs, which may have included taking suggested actions recommended in the 2021 report.

Exhibit 1

Minimum Requirements Needed to be Considered for a Significant Advancement Assessment

In order for a country to be eligible to receive an assessment of Significant Advancement, a country must have:

- Established a minimum age for work that meets international standards;
- Established a minimum age for hazardous work that meets international standards;
- Established legal prohibitions against forced labor that meet international standards;
- Established legal prohibitions against child trafficking that meet international standards;
- Established legal prohibitions against commercial sexual exploitation of children that meet international standards;
- Established legal prohibitions against the use of children for illicit activities that meet international standards;
- Designated a competent authority or implemented institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor;
- Imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor;
- Took active measures to ensure that children are not inappropriately incarcerated, penalized, or physically harmed for unlawful acts as a direct result of being a victim of the worst forms of child labor;
- Took active measures to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence public officials who participate in or facilitate the worst forms of child labor;
- Made a good-faith effort to collect and publish labor and criminal law enforcement data; and
- Directly funded a significant social program that includes the goal of eliminating child labor or addressing the root causes of the problem, such as lack of educational opportunities, poverty, or discrimination.

Moderate Advancement

A country moderately advanced its efforts in eliminating the worst forms of child labor in 2022 if it made meaningful efforts during the reporting period in some relevant areas covering laws and regulations, enforcement, coordination, policies, and social programs, which may have included taking suggested actions recommended in 2021.

Minimal Advancement

Three types of countries made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in 2022. The first is a country that made meaningful efforts during the reporting period in a few relevant areas covering laws and regulations, enforcement, coordination, policies, and social programs, which may have included taking suggested actions recommended in 2021.

The other two types of countries are those that, regardless of meaningful efforts made in relevant areas, minimally advanced as a result of establishing or failing to remedy regressive or significantly detrimental laws, policies, or practices that delayed advancement in the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Examples of regressive or significantly detrimental laws, policies, or practices include lowering the minimum age for work below international standards, recruiting or using children in armed conflict, and continuing to impose administrative barriers to child labor inspections. The following points make distinctions between regression and continued law, policy, or practice:

Regression in Law, Policy, or Practice that Delayed Advancement. This type of country made meaningful efforts in a few or more relevant areas but established a regressive or significantly detrimental law, policy, or practice during the reporting period that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor.

Continued Law, Policy, or Practice that Delayed Advancement. This type of country made meaningful efforts in a few or more relevant areas but failed to remedy a regressive or significantly detrimental law, policy, or practice established in previous years, which delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor.

No Advancement

Three types of countries made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in 2022. The first is a country that made no meaningful efforts to advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor during the reporting period.

The other two types of countries are those that, regardless of whether meaningful efforts in relevant areas were made, had a policy or demonstrated a practice of being complicit in the use of forced child labor in more than isolated incidents, which is considered an egregious form of exploitation. Complicity can occur when a government is involved in forced child labor at any level of government, including at the local, regional, or national level. Such incidents involve direct or proactive government action to compel children under age 18 to work. The following points make distinctions between a country making no efforts and being complicit and a country making efforts but being complicit:

No Efforts and Complicit in Forced Child Labor.

This type of country made no meaningful efforts, took no suggested actions reported in 2021, and had a policy or demonstrated a practice of being complicit in the use of forced child labor in more than isolated incidents in 2022.

Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor.

This type of country made meaningful efforts, which may have included taking suggested actions reported in 2021 but had a policy or demonstrated a practice of being complicit in the use of forced child labor in more than isolated incidents in 2022.

No Assessment

This assessment is reserved for countries in which the population of children is either non-existent or extremely small (fewer than 50), there is no evidence of the worst forms of child labor and the country appears to have an adequate preventive legal and enforcement framework on child labor, or when a country is included in the report for the first time or receives a suggested action for the first time. This year, no assessment has been made regarding Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and Wallis and Futuna.

TDA Country Assessments, by Assessment

COUNTRY	REGION	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT		
Argentina	LAC	Significant Advancement
Colombia	LAC	Significant Advancement
Côte d'Ivoire	AF	Significant Advancement
Uzbekistan	IP	Significant Advancement
MODERATE ADVANCEMENT		
Albania	EUR	Moderate Advancement
Angola	AF	Moderate Advancement
Belize	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Benin	AF	Moderate Advancement
Bhutan	IP	Moderate Advancement
Bolivia	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Bosnia and Herzegovina	EUR	Moderate Advancement
Botswana	AF	Moderate Advancement
Brazil	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Burkina Faso	AF	Moderate Advancement
Burundi	AF	Moderate Advancement
Cabo Verde	AF	Moderate Advancement
Cameroon	AF	Moderate Advancement
Chile	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Comoros	AF	Moderate Advancement
Costa Rica	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Djibouti	AF	Moderate Advancement
Ecuador	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Egypt	MENA	Moderate Advancement
El Salvador	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Ethiopia	AF	Moderate Advancement
Gambia, The	AF	Moderate Advancement
Georgia	EUR	Moderate Advancement
Ghana	AF	Moderate Advancement
Guatemala	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Guinea	AF	Moderate Advancement
Guinea-Bissau	AF	Moderate Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
MODERATE ADVANCEMENT (CONTINUED)		
Honduras	LAC	Moderate Advancement
India	IP	Moderate Advancement
Indonesia	IP	Moderate Advancement
Jamaica	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Jordan	MENA	Moderate Advancement
Kosovo	EUR	Moderate Advancement
Lesotho	AF	Moderate Advancement
Liberia	AF	Moderate Advancement
Madagascar	AF	Moderate Advancement
Malawi	AF	Moderate Advancement
Maldives	IP	Moderate Advancement
Mauritius	AF	Moderate Advancement
Mexico	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Moldova	EUR	Moderate Advancement
Mongolia	IP	Moderate Advancement
Morocco	MENA	Moderate Advancement
Nepal	IP	Moderate Advancement
Nigeria	AF	Moderate Advancement
Norfolk Island	IP	Moderate Advancement
Oman	MENA	Moderate Advancement
Pakistan	IP	Moderate Advancement
Panama	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Paraguay	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Peru	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Philippines	IP	Moderate Advancement
Saint Lucia	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Samoa	IP	Moderate Advancement
Senegal	AF	Moderate Advancement
Serbia	EUR	Moderate Advancement
Sierra Leone	AF	Moderate Advancement
Solomon Islands	IP	Moderate Advancement
South Africa	AF	Moderate Advancement
Sri Lanka	IP	Moderate Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
MODERATE ADVANCEMENT (CONTINUED)		
Suriname	LAC	Moderate Advancement
Tanzania	AF	Moderate Advancement
Thailand	IP	Moderate Advancement
Togo	AF	Moderate Advancement
Tunisia	MENA	Moderate Advancement
Uganda	AF	Moderate Advancement
Vanuatu	IP	Moderate Advancement
Western Sahara	MENA	Moderate Advancement
Zambia	AF	Moderate Advancement
MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT		
Algeria	MENA	Minimal Advancement
Chad	AF	Minimal Advancement
Congo, Republic of the	AF	Minimal Advancement
Cook Islands	IP	Minimal Advancement
Dominica	LAC	Minimal Advancement
Eswatini	AF	Minimal Advancement
Fiji	IP	Minimal Advancement
Guyana	LAC	Minimal Advancement
Haiti	LAC	Minimal Advancement
Kiribati	IP	Minimal Advancement
Lebanon	MENA	Minimal Advancement
Montenegro	EUR	Minimal Advancement
Mozambique	AF	Minimal Advancement
Namibia	AF	Minimal Advancement
Nicaragua	LAC	Minimal Advancement
Niger	AF	Minimal Advancement
Niue	IP	Minimal Advancement
North Macedonia	EUR	Minimal Advancement
Papua New Guinea	IP	Minimal Advancement
Rwanda	AF	Minimal Advancement
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	LAC	Minimal Advancement
São Tomé and Príncipe	AF	Minimal Advancement
Tokelau	IP	Minimal Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT (CONTINUED)		
Tuvalu	IP	Minimal Advancement
West Bank and the Gaza Strip	MENA	Minimal Advancement
MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT– Efforts Made but Regression in Law/Policy/Practice that Delayed Advancement		
Bangladesh	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practices that Delayed Advancement
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement
Dominican Republic	LAC	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement
MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT– Efforts Made but Continued Law/Policy/Practice that Delayed Advancement		
Armenia	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Azerbaijan	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Cambodia	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Central African Republic	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Gabon	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Iraq	MENA	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Kazakhstan	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Kenya	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Kyrgyz Republic	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law and Practice that Delayed Advancement
Mali	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Mauritania	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristán da Cunha	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Somalia	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Timor-Leste	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT- Efforts Made but Continued Law/Policy/Practice that Delayed Advancement (CONTINUED)		
Tonga	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Ukraine	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Yemen	MENA	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Zimbabwe	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
NO ADVANCEMENT		
Afghanistan	IP	No Advancement
Anguilla	EUR	No Advancement
British Virgin Islands	EUR	No Advancement
Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)	EUR	No Advancement
Grenada	LAC	No Advancement
Montserrat	EUR	No Advancement
NO ADVANCEMENT – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor		
Burma	IP	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor
Eritrea	AF	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor
South Sudan	AF	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor
NO ASSESSMENT		
Christmas Island	IP	No Assessment
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	IP	No Assessment
Wallis and Futuna	EUR	No Assessment

Comparisons in TDA Assessments From 2021 to 2022, by Country

COUNTRY	REGION	2021 ASSESSMENT LEVEL	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
Afghanistan	IP	No Advancement	No Advancement
Albania	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Algeria	MENA	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Angola	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Anguilla	EUR	No Advancement	No Advancement
Argentina	LAC	Significant Advancement	Significant Advancement
Armenia	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Azerbaijan	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Bangladesh	IP	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practices that Delayed Advancement
Belize	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Benin	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Bhutan	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Bolivia	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Bosnia and Herzegovina	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Botswana	AF	Minimal Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Brazil	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
British Virgin Islands	EUR	No Advancement	No Advancement
Burkina Faso	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Burma	IP	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor
Burundi	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Cabo Verde	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Cambodia	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Cameroon	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2021 ASSESSMENT LEVEL	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
Central African Republic	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Chad	AF	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Chile	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Christmas Island	IP	No Assessment	No Assessment
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	IP	No Assessment	No Assessment
Colombia	LAC	Significant Advancement	Significant Advancement
Comoros	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	AF	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement
Congo, Republic of the	AF	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Cook Islands	IP	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Costa Rica	LAC	Significant Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Côte d'Ivoire	AF	Significant Advancement	Significant Advancement
Djibouti	AF	Minimal Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Dominica	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Dominican Republic	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement
Ecuador	LAC	Significant Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Egypt	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
El Salvador	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Eritrea	AF	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor
Eswatini	AF	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Ethiopia	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	No Advancement
Fiji	IP	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Gabon	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2021 ASSESSMENT LEVEL	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
Gambia, The	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Georgia	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Ghana	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Grenada	LAC	No Advancement	No Advancement
Guatemala	LAC	Significant Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Guinea	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Guinea-Bissau	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Guyana	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Haiti	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Honduras	LAC	Significant Advancement	Moderate Advancement
India	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Indonesia	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Iraq	MENA	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Jamaica	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Jordan	MENA	Significant Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Kazakhstan	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Law that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Kenya	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Kiribati	IP	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Kosovo	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Kyrgyz Republic	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law and Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law and Practice that Delayed Advancement
Lebanon	MENA	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Lesotho	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Liberia	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Madagascar	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Malawi	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Maldives	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2021 ASSESSMENT LEVEL	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
Mali	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Mauritania	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Policy and Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement
Mauritius	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Mexico	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Moldova	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law and Practice that Delayed Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Mongolia	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Montenegro	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Montserrat	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	No Advancement
Morocco	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Mozambique	AF	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Namibia	AF	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Nepal	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Nicaragua	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Niger	AF	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Nigeria	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Niue	IP	No Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Norfolk Island	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
North Macedonia	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Oman	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Pakistan	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Panama	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Papua New Guinea	IP	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Paraguay	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Peru	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Philippines	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Rwanda	AF	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2021 ASSESSMENT LEVEL	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
Saint Helena, Ascensión, and Tristán da Cunha	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Saint Lucia	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Samoa	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
São Tomé and Príncipe	AF	Moderate Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Senegal	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Serbia	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Sierra Leone	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Solomon Islands	IP	Minimal Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Somalia	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
South Africa	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
South Sudan	AF	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor
Sri Lanka	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Suriname	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Tanzania	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Thailand	IP	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Timor-Leste	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Togo	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Tokelau	IP	No Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Tonga	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Tunisia	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Tuvalu	IP	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Uganda	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Ukraine	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement

COUNTRY	REGION	2021 ASSESSMENT LEVEL	2022 ASSESSMENT LEVEL
Uzbekistan	IP	Significant Advancement	Significant Advancement
Vanuatu	IP	Minimal Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Wallis and Futuna	EUR	No Assessment	No Assessment
West Bank and the Gaza Strip	MENA	Minimal Advancement	Minimal Advancement
Western Sahara	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Yemen	MENA	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement
Zambia	AF	Moderate Advancement	Moderate Advancement
Zimbabwe	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement



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Juan Gabriel, age 11, spins thread at his home while schools are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the school closure, he has worked with his 11 siblings in the coffee fields daily, instead of only on weekends. His father helps them with schoolwork dropped off by teachers. Nuevo Yibeljoj, Chiapas, Mexico. September 11, 2020.



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A young boy shows freshly caught fish after returning from the sea in the early morning hours on the day a ban on marine fishing was lifted. Accra, Ghana. August 1, 2021.

Appendix 6

TDA Laws and Ratifications, by Country

COUNTRY	RE- GION	2022 ASSESSMENT	ILO C. 138	ILO C. 182	CRC	CRC OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS		PALER- MO PRO- TOCOL	MIN. AGE FOR WORK	EDUCATION	
						CRC- CSEC	CRC- AC			COMPUL- SORY EDUCA- TION AGE	FREE PUBLIC EDUCA- TION
Afghanistan	IP	No Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	15	Yes
Albania	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Algeria	MENA	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Angola	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	14	Yes
Anguilla	EUR	No Advancement	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	12	17	Yes
Argentina	LAC	Significant Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	18	Yes
Armenia	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	18	Yes
Azerbaijan	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Bangladesh	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practices that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	19	14	Yes
Belize	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	14	Yes
Benin	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	11	No
Bhutan	IP	Moderate Advancement	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	13	N/A	Yes
Bolivia	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	17	Yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Botswana	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	N/A	Yes
Brazil	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	17	Yes
British Virgin Islands	EUR	No Advancement	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	16	17	Yes
Burkina Faso	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes

2022 FINDINGS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

COUNTRY	RE- GION	2022 ASSESSMENT	ILO C. 138	ILO C. 182	CRC	CRC OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS		PALER- MO PRO- TOCOL	MIN. AGE FOR WORK	EDUCATION	
						CRC- CSEC	CRC- AC			COMPUL- SORY EDUCA- TION AGE	FREE PUBLIC EDUCA- TION
Burma	IP	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	10	Yes
Burundi	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	15	No
Cabo Verde	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Cambodia	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	N/A	Yes
Cameroon	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	14	12	No
Central African Republic	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Chad	AF	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	16	No
Chile	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	18	Yes
Christmas Island	IP	No Assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	17.5	17.5	Yes
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	IP	No Assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	17.5	17.5	Yes
Colombia	LAC	Significant Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	18	Yes
Comoros	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	No
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	12	No
Congo, Republic of the	AF	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	16	16	Yes
Cook Islands	IP	Minimal Advancement	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	16	16	No
Costa Rica	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	17	Yes

COUNTRY	RE- GION	2022 ASSESSMENT	ILO C. 138	ILO C. 182	CRC	CRC OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS		PALER- MO PRO- TOCOL	MIN. AGE FOR WORK	EDUCATION	
						CRC- CSEC	CRC- AC			COMPUL- SORY EDUCA- TION AGE	FREE PUBLIC EDUCA- TION
Côte d'Ivoire	AF	Significant Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Djibouti	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Dominica	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	No
Dominican Republic	LAC	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	14	Yes
Ecuador	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Egypt	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
El Salvador	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Eritrea	AF	No Advancement – Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	14	No
Eswatini	AF	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	12/13	No
Ethiopia	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	N/A	No
Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)	EUR	No Advancement	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	14	16	Yes
Fiji	IP	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Gabon	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Gambia, The	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	16	Yes
Georgia	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	15	Yes
Ghana	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Grenada	LAC	No Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	No
Guatemala	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	15	Yes
Guinea	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	No
Guinea-Bissau	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	15	No

2022 FINDINGS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

COUNTRY	RE- GION	2022 ASSESSMENT	ILO C. 138	ILO C. 182	CRC	CRC OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS		PALER- MO PRO- TOCOL	MIN. AGE FOR WORK	EDUCATION	
						CRC- CSEC	CRC- AC			COMPUL- SORY EDUCA- TION AGE	FREE PUBLIC EDUCA- TION
Guyana	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Haiti	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	15	Yes
Honduras	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	17	Yes
India	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	14	Yes
Indonesia	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	No
Iraq	MENA	Minimal Advancement - Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	12	Yes
Jamaica	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	No
Jordan	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Kazakhstan	IP	Minimal Advancement - Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	17	Yes
Kenya	AF	Minimal Advancement - Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	16	18	No
Kiribati	IP	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	15	Yes
Kosovo	EUR	Moderate Advancement	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15	15	Yes
Kyrgyz Republic	IP	Minimal Advancement - Efforts Made but Continued Law and Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	17	Yes
Lebanon	MENA	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	14	15	Yes
Lesotho	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	13	Yes
Liberia	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	15	14	Yes
Madagascar	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Malawi	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	18	Yes
Maldives	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes

COUNTRY	RE- GION	2022 ASSESSMENT	ILO C. 138	ILO C. 182	CRC	CRC OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS		PALER- MO PRO- TOCOL	MIN. AGE FOR WORK	EDUCATION	
						CRC- CSEC	CRC- AC			COMPUL- SORY EDUCA- TION AGE	FREE PUBLIC EDUCA- TION
Mali	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	No
Mauritania	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	16	14	Yes
Mauritius	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Mexico	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	18	Yes
Moldova	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	18	Yes
Mongolia	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Montenegro	EUR	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Montserrat	EUR	No Advancement	No	No	No	No	No	No	16	16	Yes
Morocco	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Mozambique	AF	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Namibia	AF	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	18	Yes
Nepal	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	14	Yes
Nicaragua	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	12	Yes
Niger	AF	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	N/A	Yes
Nigeria	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	12	15	Yes
Niue	IP	Minimal Advancement	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	16	Yes
Norfolk Island	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	No
North Macedonia	EUR	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	Yes
Oman	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Pakistan	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	Yes
Panama	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	15	Yes
Papua New Guinea	IP	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	16	N/A	No
Paraguay	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	17	Yes

2022 FINDINGS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

COUNTRY	RE- GION	2022 ASSESSMENT	ILO C. 138	ILO C. 182	CRC	CRC OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS		PALER- MO PRO- TOCOL	MIN. AGE FOR WORK	EDUCATION	
						CRC- CSEC	CRC- AC			COMPUL- SORY EDUCA- TION AGE	FREE PUBLIC EDUCA- TION
Peru	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	17	Yes
Philippines	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	18	Yes
Rwanda	AF	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	12	No
Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha	EUR	Minimal Advancement - Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	16	16	Yes
Saint Lucia	LAC	Moderate Advancement	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	No
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	LAC	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	16	Yes
Samoa	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	15	16	No
São Tomé and Príncipe	AF	Minimal Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	15	15	Yes
Senegal	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	Yes
Serbia	EUR	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Sierra Leone	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Solomon Islands	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	12	N/A	No
Somalia	AF	Minimal Advancement - Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	15	14	Yes
South Africa	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	No
South Sudan	AF	No Advancement - Efforts Made but Complicit in Forced Child Labor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	14	13	Yes
Sri Lanka	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Suriname	LAC	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	12	Yes
Tanzania	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	13	No
Thailand	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	Yes

COUNTRY	RE- GION	2022 ASSESSMENT	ILO C. 138	ILO C. 182	CRC	CRC OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS		PALER- MO PRO- TOCOL	MIN. AGE FOR WORK	EDUCATION	
						CRC- CSEC	CRC- AC			COMPUL- SORY EDUCA- TION AGE	FREE PUBLIC EDUCA- TION
Timor-Leste	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	Yes
Togo	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	No
Tokelau	IP	Minimal Advancement	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	16	Yes
Tonga	IP	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	18	No
Tunisia	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
Tuvalu	IP	Minimal Advancement	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	15	15	No
Uganda	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	16	13	No
Ukraine	EUR	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Law that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	17	Yes
Uzbekistan	IP	Significant Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	18	Yes
Vanuatu	IP	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	14	N/A	No
Wallis and Futuna	EUR	No Assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	Yes
West Bank and the Gaza Strip	MENA	Minimal Advancement	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	16	Yes
Western Sahara	MENA	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	Yes
Yemen	MENA	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	14	15	Yes
Zambia	AF	Moderate Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	15	N/A	Yes
Zimbabwe	AF	Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16	16	No



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A child laborer works in a cooking pot manufacturing plant. In this type of aluminum factory, 30–50 percent of employees are children who earn \$3.00–3.50 per day for their work. Dhaka, Bangladesh. June 12, 2021.

Appendix 7

Reference Materials—Key Concepts and Definitions

Children’s Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions

In this report, 109 country profiles include a statistical table (Table 1, Statistics on Children’s Work and Education) with data on the percentage of working children, school attendance rate, percentage of children who combine school and work, and/or primary completion rate. For a smaller set of profiles, a chart lists the percentages of children who work by sector.

This appendix provides definitions and descriptions of the sources for these data and some of the strengths and weaknesses inherent within them. In a few cases, more current sources of data may be available than the ones used in this report; however, the most reliable, standardized sources available to date are used to allow for cross-country comparisons. Because reliable child labor surveys are not available for many countries, in some cases USDOL uses statistics from child labor surveys that are more than 10 years old (data from earlier than 2013). If data did not exist from the sources described below, if no other reliable and publicly available source of data exists for a country, or if data exist but have not been analyzed to allow for cross-country comparisons, this report concludes that the statistics are “unavailable.”

Working Children

Many of the statistical tables in the country profiles in this report present data on the percentage and number of working children. Data presented in the current report may differ from data that were presented in previous reports because updated data have become available.

Definition

The term “working children” describes children engaged in any productive activity for at least 1 hour during the reference period. Productive activity includes market production and certain types of non-market production, principally the production of goods and services for their own use. The work that children perform may be in the formal or informal economy, inside or outside family settings, or for pay or profit. This includes children working in domestic service outside the child’s own household for an employer, paid or unpaid. This definition is in accordance with the Resolution to Amend the 18th ICLS Resolution Concerning Statistics of Child Labor, adopted by the 20th International Conference of Labor Statisticians (ICLS) in 2018, and the ILO and UNICEF report *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward*. (38; 52) The 20th ICLS definition classifies working children as those engaged in any activity to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for their own use. The definition also includes the production of additional types of services for family use, unpaid trainee work by children, volunteer work by children, and other work activities by children. Since most countries are in the process of adapting survey instruments to reflect this new definition, the definition of working children from the 18th ICLS Resolution has been used in this report.

Working Children Versus Children Engaged in Child Labor

This report presents statistics on “working children” rather than on “children involved in child labor.” These terms are defined precisely in Appendix 2, “Definitions Related to Child Labor and Forced Labor.” The definition of working children does not

vary among countries and, therefore, statistics on working children are comparable across country profiles. In contrast, the definition of children involved in child labor is based on national legislation, including, for example, the minimum age for work, which varies from country to country. As a result, child labor data based on this measurement are not comparable across countries. Furthermore, these country-level statistics may not disaggregate child labor from the broader category of child work, thereby including children who work only a few hours a week in permitted light work. For the purposes of this report, ILAB is unable to clearly articulate the proportion of working children who are involved in child labor.

Data Sources and Limitations

Data are primarily from the ILO's analysis of four survey types: (1) the ILO's Statistical Information and Monitoring Program on Child Labor (SIMPOC) surveys; (2) national Labor Force Surveys (LFS); (3) UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS); and (4) other national and regional household surveys, including Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

According to ILO researchers, typical surveys on children's work do not collect sufficiently detailed information on children's activities to accurately measure economic activity. (53) This observation was repeated in December 2008 at the 18th ICLS. A resolution adopted at the conference provides guidelines for governments on collecting child labor data. Specifically, the guidance indicates that countries can choose to use a broad framework to measure children's work and child labor that encompasses unpaid household services or countries can use a narrower definition of children's work that excludes such services, as long as the definition used is clearly specified. This resolution is contributing to the collection of more comparable data on children's involvement in non-market activities. In addition, although the 20th ICLS introduced changes to the definition of working children to align it with internationally accepted definitions of work for adults, since most countries are in the process of adapting

survey instruments to reflect this new definition, the definition of working children from the 18th ICLS Resolution has been used in this report. (38; 39)

In analyzing the data from the above-mentioned surveys, the ILO attempted to apply a standard definition of children's work, although UNICEF's MICS and ILO's SIMPOC reports, for example, each use a different definition of work. As of the writing of this report, MICS reports include household chores in their definition of work, while some SIMPOC reports do not, depending on each country's basis for reporting. To the extent possible, the ILO applied a common definition of work to the micro-data described. To date, this has resulted in the individual analysis of more than 250 datasets. While every attempt was made to present a standardized child work statistic, differences across surveys have the potential to affect the comparability of statistics across countries and across years. Some of these differences are explained in greater detail here; however, in general, they include differing age groups, questionnaire content and wording, purpose of the survey, sample design, non-sampling errors, and the year of data collection.

In general, data are presented for children ages 5 to 14; however, some of the profiles present a work statistic for children ages 6 to 14, 7 to 14, or 10 to 14, depending on the age categories used in the original survey. The wording of work-related questions also may affect the results. For example, the question on work in these surveys usually refers to work during the past 7 days; however, some surveys may refer to work activities during the past 12 months, and thus they are likely to capture a higher proportion of working children than surveys with 7-day timeframes. The purpose of the survey—whether specifically to measure children's work and child labor (SIMPOC surveys) or measure labor force participation of adults—may affect estimates of children's work. (54) Sample design may also affect survey results. For example, children's work is often clustered geographically; SIMPOC surveys are designed to capture children's work in such geographic areas. As a result, estimates of working children vary across surveys that do not

use the same sample design. (53) The ILO and UNICEF continue to investigate the effects of these survey differences on estimates of children’s work.

As noted, some country profiles also include the sectors in which children reportedly work. For some surveys, the sector of work was not reported by the entire sample of working children. Therefore, the distribution of children working by sector—agriculture, industry, and services—represents children with non-missing data for the sector of work. Additional information on the sectors of work reported in the chart appear in Table 1.

Percentage of Children Attending School

The percentage of children attending school is the share of all children within a specified age group that reported attending school. The ILO data described above in the section “Working Children” are used to develop country-specific school attendance statistics. To be consistent with estimates of working children, the age group for which attendance statistics are calculated for children is generally ages 5 to 14. In some cases, however, different age categories are used, usually ages 6 to 14, 7 to 14, or 10 to 14.

Percentage of Children Combining Work and School

The percentage of children who combine work and school is the share of all children within a specified age group reporting both working and attending school. The ILO data described earlier under “Working Children” are used to develop country-specific statistics on children combining work and school. The age group for which these statistics are calculated is usually for children ages 7 to 14 or 10 to 14.

Primary Completion Rate

This report uses the “gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education” as a proxy measure for primary completion. This ratio is the total number of new entrants in the last grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical entrance age to the last grade of primary education. A high ratio indicates a

high degree of current primary education completion. The calculation includes all new entrants to the last grade, regardless of age. Therefore, the ratio can exceed 100 percent, due to over- and underage children who enter primary school late or early or repeat grades.

Data Sources and Limitations

Unlike the other statistics presented in the country profile data tables, which are all based on the ILO analysis described earlier, primary completion rate data are from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The data were downloaded on March 15, 2023, and are available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>. Further information on this statistic is available from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics Glossary at <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary>.

UNESCO uses population estimates from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to calculate some of the rates it publishes, including the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education. These population estimates change over time. The last revision that affected the statistics used in this report was in March 2023. All population-based indicators, including the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, are re-calculated every year using the latest estimates. For some countries and years, when the new UNDP population estimates are found to be inconsistent with education data, related indicators are removed. All updates made to UNESCO data on the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education are reflected in the primary completion rate statistic included in this report.

Labor Law Enforcement: Sources and Definitions

Labor Force Calculation

This report uses data from either government-reported labor force statistics collected by the ILO or from labor force estimates by the ILO modeled on a combination of demographic and economic factors. Both sources of labor force data provide the most recent estimates for countries’ total labor force. This

number is used to calculate a “sufficient number” of labor inspectors based on the country’s level of development, as determined by the UN. (55)

Country Classification

For analyses, the Development Policy and Analysis Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (UN DESA) classifies all countries of the world into one of four broad categories: (1) developed economies, (2) economies in transition, (3) developing economies, and (4) least developed countries. The composition of these groupings is intended to reflect basic economic country conditions. Several countries, in particular the economies in transition, have characteristics that could place them in more than one category; however, for analyses, the groupings have been made mutually exclusive. This is decided upon by the UN Economic and Social Council and, ultimately, by the General Assembly deciding on the list of least developed countries based on recommendations made by the Committee for Development Policy. The basic criteria for inclusion require that certain thresholds be met for per capita gross national income, a human assets index, and an economic vulnerability index. For the *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* report, “developed economies” equates to the ILO’s classification of “industrial market economies,” “economies in transition” to “transition economies,” “developing economies” to “industrializing economies,” and “least developed countries” to “less developed countries.” Countries that appear on both “developing economies” and “least developed countries” lists are considered “least developed countries” for calculating a “sufficient number” of labor inspectors. (56)

Number of Labor Inspectors

Article 10 of ILO C. 81 calls for a “sufficient number” of inspectors to do the work required. Because each country assigns different priorities of enforcement to its inspectors, there is no official definition for a sufficient number of inspectors. In 2022, the ILO updated its guidance for assessing the size of country/territory labor inspectorates to emphasize

a holistic evaluation of national context rather than solely a ratio of labor inspectors to labor force size. The factors that need to be considered include the number and nature of the functions assigned to the inspection system; the number, nature, size, and situation of the workplaces liable to inspection; the number of workers; the number and complexity of legal provisions to be enforced; the material and financial resources available to the inspectorate; and the practical conditions under which visits of inspection must be carried out in order to be effective. No single measure is sufficient; however, in many countries, the available data sources are weak. The ratio of inspectors per workforce is currently the only internationally comparable indicator available. In its policy and technical advisory services, the ILO has taken as reasonable benchmarks that the number of labor inspectors in relation to workers should approach 1:10,000 in industrial market economies, 1:15,000 in industrializing economies, 1:20,000 in transition economies, and 1:40,000 in less developed countries. (57; 58)

ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations

The ILO CEACR examines and makes two types of comments on the application of international labor standards by states that are party to the relevant conventions. Direct requests contain the Committee’s technical comments or questions about the state’s application of a particular convention, and these requests are sent directly to governments. Observations, which are published in the Committee’s annual report, contain comments on fundamental questions raised by a state’s application of a particular convention and recommendations for the state. (58)

Glossary of Other Terms

Basic Education

Article 7(c) of ILO C. 182 requires countries to, “ensure access to free basic education.” According to the International Standard Classification of Education, “basic education” corresponds to the first 9 years

of formal schooling and comprises primary and lower secondary education. Primary education is considered to be the first stage of basic education and covers 6 years of full-time schooling, with the legal age of entrance normally being no younger than age 5 or older than age 7. Primary education is designed to give pupils a sound basis in reading, writing, and mathematics, along with an elementary understanding of other subjects, such as history, geography, natural science, social science, religion, art, and music. Lower secondary education is more subject-focused and requires specialized teachers. It corresponds to about 3 years of schooling. Basic education also can include various non-formal and informal public and private educational activities offered to meet the defined basic learning needs of groups of people of all ages. (6)

Article 13 of the UN's 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights indicates that primary education should be compulsory and free to all. Secondary education, including technical and vocational education, should be available and accessible to all, and free education should be progressively introduced. Article 28 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the right of the child to an education and the state's duty to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory. (59; 60)

Bonded Labor, Debt Bondage

Bonded labor or debt bondage is, "the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or those of a person under his control as security for a debt if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined," as defined in the UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956). (43)

Bonded labor typically occurs when a person who needs a loan and has no security to offer pledges

their labor, or that of someone under their control, as security for a loan. In some cases, the interest on the loan may be so high that it cannot be paid. In others, it may be deemed that the bonded individual's work repays the interest on the loan but not the principal. Thus, the loan is inherited and perpetuated, and becomes an inter-generational debt. (43)

Bonded labor is prohibited as one of the worst forms of child labor in ILO C. 182. (6)

Child Domestic Worker

A "child domestic worker" works in third-party private households under an employment relationship and engages in various tasks that include cleaning, cooking, gardening, collecting water, or caring for children and the elderly. Child domestic workers sometimes have live-in arrangements, whereby they live in their employer's household and work in exchange for room, board, and sometimes education. Child domestic workers are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including sexual, physical, and verbal abuse, in large part because they often depend on their employers for basic needs and work in locations hidden from public view. (61; 62)

Child Labor Elimination Projects

Since 1995, USDOL has funded over 360 projects in 99 countries. USDOL currently oversees more than \$291 million in active programming to combat exploitative child labor. To date, USDOL-funded projects have provided nearly 2 million children with education and vocational training opportunities as a strategy for preventing and reducing child labor and increasing access to education in disadvantaged communities.

Child Trafficking

The UN's Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) states, "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph

(a) of this Article.” As such, there does not need to be abuse of power, control, coercion, or fraud present to constitute child trafficking, as the definition for adults requires. The Palermo Protocol provides a commonly accepted definition of human trafficking in Article 3(a) that trafficking in persons means, “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” (63)

The trafficking of children is prohibited as a worst form of child labor in ILO C. 182, Article 3(a). (6)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Based on the 1996 Declaration and Agenda for Action of the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is defined as, “sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or third person or persons.” (64) The remuneration dynamic distinguishes CSEC from the sexual abuse of a child, which does not include commercial gain; however, commercial sexual exploitation also involves abuse. The definition of CSEC includes these activities:

- Prostitution in the streets or indoors, and in such places as brothels, discotheques, massage parlors, bars, hotels, and restaurants
- Child sex tourism
- The production, promotion, and distribution of pornography involving children
- The use of children in sex shows (public or private)

ILO C. 182, Article 3(b), prohibits using, procuring, or offering a child for prostitution or for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances. (6)

Compulsory Education Age

The age up to which children and youth are legally required to attend school. (65)

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child spells out the basic rights of children, such as the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to be protected from harmful influences, abuse, and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural, and social life. The Convention protects children’s rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil, and social services. According to Article 32 of the Convention, children have the right, “to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development.” (59)

Hazardous Work

Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182 sets forth, “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children,” as a worst form of child labor. This is colloquially referred to as “hazardous work.” Countries must determine which types of work are considered to be hazardous work by statute or regulation. ILO R. 190 includes factors for consideration in determining which types of work are hazardous. (47)

ILO Recommendation No. 190: Worst Forms of Child Labor

ILO R. 190 supplements the provisions of ILO C. 182 and provides guidance to ratifying countries regarding its implementation. It provides guidelines to assist countries in determining what types of work should be considered hazardous and thus what type of work countries should prohibit for all children as a

worst form of child labor, in accordance with Article 4 of ILO C. 182. ILO R. 190 describes populations in need of specific attention regarding the worst forms of child labor, such as girls and children involved in hidden forms of work. It also provides guidance regarding specific steps that countries which have ratified ILO C. 182 should take to combat the worst forms of child labor, such as the collection and exchange of data on both the problem and best practices to address it; passage and enforcement of laws that penalize violations with criminal penalties; awareness raising about the problem; establishment of policies against the worst forms of child labor; and international cooperation through technical, legal, and other forms of assistance. (6; 47)

Illicit Activities

ILO C. 182, Article 3(c), prohibits, “the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs.” Illicit activities in this context can include activities that are criminal under national law, however, the term refers to activities considered illicit under international instruments. (6) According to ILO R. 190 and the General Survey on the Fundamental Conventions Concerning Rights at Work, illicit activities can include, “activities which involve the unlawful carrying or use of firearms or other weapons,” and, “the use of children by criminal organizations for transporting weapons and carrying out arson attacks or destroying public or private property, illicit activities such as housebreaking and petty theft, and children being engaged by adults in car breaking, housebreaking, selling drugs and selling stolen goods, use of children for forced or organized begging, gambling, the unlawful carrying or use of firearms or other weapons, or for the commission of an offence or a crime using violence or the threat of violence.” (47)

Informal Sector

While the concept of the informal sector was introduced into international usage in the 1970s, it was only in 1993 at the 15th ICLS that an internationally recognized definition was established for data collection to delineate the “informal sector” as

unincorporated, small, or unregistered enterprises, and the employees of those enterprises. An enterprise is unincorporated if no complete set of accounts are available that would permit a financial separation of the activities of the enterprise from that of its owners, and it produces marketable goods or services. The registration and size criteria are determined according to national circumstances and legislation, which provide a degree of flexibility in identifying the informal sector from country to country. However, all interpretations of this sector share the notion of enterprises whose activities are not covered or are insufficiently covered by law, or whose activities are not covered by law in practice, meaning that the relevant law is not applied or enforced. Workers in such enterprises often lack the benefits of regular, stable, and protected employment. Because employers in the informal sector are generally either not covered by labor laws or are not held accountable for complying with labor protections, including occupational safety measures, children who work in “hazardous” informal settings likely face increased risk of exploitation, including injury. In addition, because businesses in the informal sector are not usually included in official statistics, children working in informal sector enterprises may not be counted in labor force activity rates. (66; 67)

Light Work

This report uses the definition of light work as established in ILO C. 138, Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. Under Article 7(1) of the Convention, “National laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons 13 to 15 years of age on light work which is (a) not likely to be harmful to their health or development; and (b) not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programmes approved by the competent authority, or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received.” Countries that have specified a minimum legal working age of 14 may permit the employment or work of persons ages 12 to 14 in light work as defined in Article 7(1). Under Article 7(2), countries may also permit the employment in light work of children

who are at least age 15 but have not yet completed compulsory schooling. Countries permitting light work under Article 7 must specify limitations on their hours of work, as well as activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken. (46)

Minimum Age for Work

The minimum age for work is the age at which a child can enter into work other than light work or hazardous work. ILO C. 138 states that the minimum age for admission to employment should not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and should not be less than age 15, or age 14 for developing countries that specified a minimum legal age of 14 upon ratification of ILO C. 138. (46)

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

This optional UN protocol, adopted in 2000, addresses and commits ratifying countries to take action against the involvement of children in armed conflict, which is a worst form of child labor per ILO C. 182, Article 3(a). (68)

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

This optional UN protocol, adopted in 2000, addresses and commits ratifying countries to prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children, which is a worst form of child labor as defined in ILO C. 182, Article 3(b). (6) (69)

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)

This document is written by the government of a developing country with the participation of civil society to serve as the basis for concessional lending from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as debt relief under the World Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. A poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) should be used to measure poverty in the country, identify goals for

reducing poverty, and create a spending and policy program for reaching those goals. A PRSP also should ensure that a country's macroeconomic, structural, and social policies are consistent with the objectives of poverty reduction and social development. A new PRSP must be written every 3 years to continue receiving assistance from international financial institutions such as the World Bank. (70)

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol)

The Palermo Protocol supplements the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and covers the trafficking of children, also delineated as a worst form of child labor under ILO C. 182, Article 3(a). (71) See "Child Trafficking" above. (6; 63)

Ratification

Ratification is a serious undertaking whereby a state formally accepts the terms of an international agreement, thus becoming legally bound to apply it. Generally, an ILO convention comes into force in a ratifying country 12 months after the government has deposited the requisite instrument of ratification. This grace period provides ILO members time to enact or modify legislation to comply with the convention before it comes into force. (45)

Slavery

Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised. (42)

Unpaid Household Services

For this report, the term "unpaid household services by children" refers to the domestic and personal services a child performs within the child's own household, under the following conditions: (1) for long hours; (2) in an unhealthy environment, including equipment or heavy loads; or (3) in dangerous locations. (61)

Appendix 8

Research Framework and Organization of TDA Country Profiles

Research Methods

This section describes the research methods used for data collection, as well as the sources, analysis of information, and the limitations of these methods in this report.

Data Collection and Sources

Information was gathered for this report through desk research, U.S. embassy reporting, and limited fieldwork. Information also was received from some foreign governments. Desk research consisted of an extensive review of mostly online materials, which included both primary and secondary sources. The sources included academic and independent researchers, media outlets, NGOs, international organizations, foreign governments, and U.S. government agencies. Information also was collected from U.S. government-funded technical assistance and field research projects.

Examples of the sources used in this report are the most recent available editions of country laws relevant to child labor; national-level child labor surveys; NGO reports on the nature of child labor in various countries; and UN reports, including direct requests and observations by the ILO Committee of Experts. (58)

The U.S. Department of State and U.S. embassies and consulates abroad provided important information by gathering data from contacts, conducting site visits, and reviewing local media sources. A request for information from the public was published in the *Federal Register*, and a copy of the request was mailed

to the Washington, D.C.-based foreign embassies of the countries included in this report. (72) Data also were gathered through key informant interviews.

Analysis of Information

The existence of child labor, particularly in its worst forms, often involves violations of laws and regulations, including serious criminal violations. Information on child labor may be intentionally suppressed. Victims of the worst forms of child labor often are unable to claim their rights or even communicate the abuse they are suffering because they are traumatized, unaware of their rights under the law, or politically underrepresented or marginalized. These factors make information on the worst forms of child labor difficult to obtain. Therefore, to compile a credible and comprehensive report, ILAB uses the following criteria to assess information:

Nature of the information

Whether the information about child labor and government efforts to combat it—gathered from research, public submissions, or other sources—was relevant and probative, and covered the “worst forms of child labor” and “government efforts” as used in this report. Specific evidence of government efforts was preferred when it was available.

Date of the information

Whether the source information about child labor was no more than 5 years old. More current information was given priority, and to the extent possible, ILAB uses sources published during the reporting period. Information from sources older than 5 years was generally not considered.

In the case of child labor statistics, however, certain factors contribute to less frequent generation of new data. Because government and other efforts to address exploitative child labor take time to have an impact on national-level rates of child labor, children's involvement in such activities does not change dramatically from year to year. Child labor surveys are carried out infrequently, in part, because the child labor picture does not change frequently, although the number of surveys has increased recently. To present an overall picture of children's work in as many countries as possible, ILAB uses statistics that are, in some cases, more than 10 years old as of the writing of this report. For more information on the statistics used in this report, see "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" in Appendix 7.

In addition, in cases in which previous editions of this report have asserted that the worst forms of child labor exist in the production of goods, and in the absence of evidence that the problem has been effectively eliminated, sources more than 5 years old may be used. This practice makes the report's information on such forms of child labor consistent with USDOL's *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*, as mandated by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005 (TVPRA). Statements that the worst forms of child labor exist in the production of goods will be removed when there is evidence that the problem has been effectively eliminated.

Source of the information

Whether the information, either from primary or secondary sources, was from a source in which methodology, prior publications, degree of familiarity and experience with international labor standards, or reputation for accuracy and objectivity warranted a determination that it was relevant and probative.

Extent of the corroboration

Whether the information about the use of child labor was corroborated by other sources.

Limitations

While data on the worst forms of child labor and information about government efforts to provide remediation are improving, data are still insufficient to provide a complete understanding of the problem. A lack of information may create the impression that a country has less serious problems with the worst forms of child labor than it actually has. At the same time, a dearth of information may create the impression that a government is doing less than it should when, in fact, efforts to address child labor exist, but are simply unreported or unpublicized. Although countries with open and available information may sometimes appear to have greater problems relative to other countries, this may not be the case. In fact, countries that collect information on child labor are in a better position to eliminate the problem than countries in which such information is suppressed, because with better information, they can target policies and programs toward identified problem areas to achieve maximum impact.

Due to an inability to travel to each country covered in the report, ILAB relies on U.S. embassies, internet research, and submissions received in response to the *Federal Register* notice to gather primary and secondary sources of information. For countries where internet access and technology are limited, there may be less information available online. Countries with more closed government processes and less civil society participation also may have less information readily available. When ILAB is unable to find information about report topics, including the content of important laws or enforcement efforts, this is noted in the report.

Most of ILAB's online research is conducted in English; however, we also gather and read source materials written in Spanish, French, and, to a limited extent, Portuguese, Russian, and Arabic. Materials other than laws written in other languages are generally not reviewed.

Despite ILAB's best efforts to cover relevant topics as comprehensively as possible, this report cannot

address every salient issue that may affect children’s involvement in child labor. For example, there are many factors that affect whether a household sends a child to school, to work, or both. A lack of available information, however, limits the discussion of these issues for some countries. In these cases, we note that the profile’s information is incomplete. Furthermore, ILAB chose to limit its reporting of education to the issue of access, and generally does not cover the quality of education because research on the relationship between the quality of education and child labor is lacking.

Organization and Content of Country Profiles

ILAB organizes country profiles to track the types of efforts outlined in the TDA Conference Committee report. In this report, the Conference Committee indicated that the President should consider certain criteria when determining whether a country has met its obligation under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program to implement its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. (3) Each country profile contains an introductory paragraph that provides an assessment of government actions to advance efforts in eliminating the worst forms of child labor, six sections that describe the problem and different aspects of government efforts to address it, and a set of suggested actions. The following section describes the content in country profiles.

Content of Country Profiles

Each country profile begins with a single-paragraph overview of 2022 and a statement identifying the assessment level assigned to the country for 2022. Following the statement of assessment, the summary includes meaningful efforts taken by a government to implement its commitment to eliminating child labor. The summary also notes where children are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, or if no worst forms

of child labor exist, where they are engaged in tasks for which there is evidence that such tasks fall into the categories suggested by ILO R. 190 for hazardous work—referred to as “dangerous tasks” in this report. Depending on the situation in the country, the summary also may discuss child labor that does not rise to the level of hazardous work. Finally, the paragraph highlights areas in which key gaps in government efforts remain.

Section I: Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor

The first section of each country profile provides, to the extent that information is available, a comprehensive picture of child labor in the country. This section begins with a review of available data on working children and school attendance, followed by a presentation of the most common sectors and activities in which children are engaged. The narrative also provides information about the nature and conditions of the work, specific populations that are particularly vulnerable to child labor, government complicity in the use of forced child labor, circumstances that make accessing education difficult, and events during the year that destabilized the country.

Section II: Legal Framework for Child Labor

The second section of the country profile addresses the second criteria included in the TDA Conference Committee report concerning whether the country has, “adequate laws and regulations proscribing the worst forms of child labor.” (73) This section describes a country’s legal framework with regard to child labor and assesses the adequacy of that legal framework by comparing it, in general, to the standards set forth in ILO C. 182 and ILO C. 138, and to other international instruments, including the Palermo Protocol and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. ILAB considered whether the laws criminally prohibited the categorical worst forms of child labor in ILO C. 182, Articles 3(a)–(c), as suggested by ILO R. 190. In line with the ILO Committee of

Experts, ILAB considered any law that could be used to prohibit child labor, including its worst forms. ILAB also considered whether the country had ratified key international instruments related to child labor.

It is important to note that ILAB analyzes a country's legal framework regarding compliance with international standards, regardless of whether a problem exists in a country. This is to ensure that legal frameworks also serve as preventive mechanisms. For example, even in the case of a country that does not have a problem with the use of children in illicit activities, if there are no laws to prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, the report points out a gap when comparing laws on this issue against international standards.

The corresponding table indicates where the legal framework meets international standards and where it does not. For example, the table indicates whether the country's minimum age for work complies with the international standard.

ILAB assesses whether a country has created a hazardous work list and whether the types of hazardous work prohibited are comprehensive, based on whether there is evidence that children engage in work which, according to ILO R. 190, may be hazardous. Because the standards on the minimum age for work in ILO C. 138 provide a foundation for protections against the worst forms of child labor, ILAB uses the standards embodied in that convention to assess each country's minimum age for admission to work and the age up to which education is compulsory. ILO C. 138 establishes that countries should set a minimum age of 15 for work, or age 14 for countries with less-developed economies where the country has specified an age of 14 upon ratification of the convention. For countries that permit children to engage in light work, ILAB also indicates whether the country has set a minimum age of 13 for light work, or age 12 for less-developed economies, and whether legislation related to light work determines permitted activities, and the number of hours per week and the conditions under which light work may be conducted.

ILAB assesses whether a country's laws criminally prohibit slavery and practices similar to slavery, including debt bondage and forced labor, as well as human trafficking. In accordance with the Palermo Protocol's standard for child trafficking, ILAB reviews statutes criminalizing international and domestic trafficking for both commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, including whether the legal protections prohibit the five actions that comprise the human trafficking process—recruiting, harboring, transporting, transferring, and receiving persons.

For the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children, ILAB assesses whether a country's laws criminally prohibit the using, procuring, and offering of children for prostitution; the production of child pornography; and the use of children in pornographic performances. For illicit activities, ILAB assesses whether laws criminally prohibit the using, procuring, and offering of a child in the production and trafficking of drugs.

In all cases in which countries maintain a military force, ILAB assesses whether the country prohibited the compulsory military recruitment of children and whether the minimum age for voluntary military recruitment is at least age 16, with certain safeguards to ensure voluntariness. For all countries, ILAB assesses whether the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups is criminally prohibited, even if non-state armed groups are not present in the country.

ILAB assesses whether the age for compulsory education aligns with the minimum age for work, in accordance with ILO C. 138, which states that the minimum age for work should not be less than the age up to which education is compulsory, and that it should be at least age 15, or age 14 for developing countries. However, the opposite situation—in which the minimum age for work is higher than the upper cut-off age for compulsory education—also should be avoided because when children are not required to be in school or permitted to work, they are susceptible to the worst forms of child labor.

Section III: Enforcement of Laws on Child Labor

The third section of the country profile addresses the second and third criteria included in the TDA Conference Committee report concerning whether the country has, “adequate laws and regulations for the implementation and enforcement of such measures,” and has, “established formal institutional mechanisms to investigate and address complaints relating to allegations of the worst forms of child labor.” (73) This section describes the role of government agencies in enforcing laws relevant to child labor, including its worst forms, and reports on labor law and criminal law enforcement efforts during the reporting period.

In this section, ILAB analyzes whether and to what degree the country defines enforcement agency roles and investigates and addresses complaints related to allegations of child labor. Because ILO C. 182 only discusses enforcement to a limited extent, other international standards and practices also are considered as general evaluation guidelines, including from ILO C. 81 and ILO C. 129 on Labor Inspection and Labor Inspection in Agriculture, respectively. (51; 74) To the extent possible, ILAB assesses whether the country has taken these actions:

- Established labor inspection systems, including a functioning labor inspectorate.
- Provided sufficient funding and resources to enforce child labor laws and regulations.
- Employed a sufficient number of inspectors to enforce the country’s child labor laws and regulations.
- Provided sufficient training for inspectors, including initial training for new employees, training on new laws related to child labor, and refresher courses.
- Developed and implemented an adequate labor inspection strategy that allows for different types of onsite inspections of worksites—such as routine, targeted, complaint-driven, and

unannounced—and conducted inspections with sufficient frequency and in all relevant sectors.

- Provided sufficient authority to the labor inspectorate to penalize child labor violations and follow through with sanctions, where appropriate.
- Published information on specific inspection results and fines or sanctions imposed for violation of child labor laws and regulations, including the worst forms of child labor.
- Established a complaint mechanism for labor violations.
- Set up a reciprocal referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services.

Although ILAB conducts research and requests law enforcement information on the topics for this year’s report, the information is not always available. For example, in many cases, ILAB does not have enough information to determine whether the number of inspectors was sufficient for the country. Only in certain situations, where a country’s government acknowledges that it does not have a sufficient number of labor inspectors or ILAB obtains information indicating that the number of labor inspectors is insufficient relative to the size of the country’s workforce, does ILAB issue findings of insufficiency. (75)

In addition, ILO R. 190 states that countries should criminally prohibit the categorical worst forms of child labor as set forth in ILO C. 182, Articles 3(a)–(c). (6; 47) Therefore, the report also assesses whether criminal law enforcement in the country has taken these actions:

- Established criminal investigation systems.
- Provided sufficient funding and resources to enforce the worst forms of child labor laws and regulations.
- Provided sufficient training for investigators, including initial training for new employees, training on new laws related to the worst forms of child labor, and refresher courses.

- Conducted a sufficient number of investigations related to the worst forms of child labor.
- Published information on specific investigation results and violations, prosecutions, and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.
- Imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.
- Established a reciprocal referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services.

Section IV: Coordination of Government Efforts on Child Labor

The fourth section of the country profile also addresses the third criterion included in the TDA Conference Committee report—whether the country has established, “formal institutional mechanisms to investigate and address complaints relating to allegations of the worst forms of child labor.” (73) This section provides information on key institutions in the country charged with coordinating overall efforts to combat child labor, including its worst forms. Although the TDA Conference Committee report speaks only to whether such mechanisms are in place with regard to investigation and complaints of the worst forms of child labor, ILO C. 182, Article 5, states that, “[e]ach Member shall, after consultation with employers’ and workers’ organizations, establish or designate appropriate mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the provisions giving effect to this Convention.” ILAB applies this concept of monitoring to all provisions of the Convention, not just those directly related to the enforcement of child labor laws. However, because the term “monitor” is often associated exclusively with enforcement activities, ILAB uses the term “coordinate” to describe this function.

Section V: Government Policies on Child Labor

The fifth section of the country profile provides information on the fourth criterion in the TDA

Conference Committee report—whether the country has, “a comprehensive policy for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.” (73) This section describes a country’s key policies and plans to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

ILAB uses the framework provided in ILO R. 190, Article 15(f), which illustrates measures that countries might take to combat the worst forms of child labor, such as, “encouraging the development of policies by undertakings to promote the aims of the Convention.” (47) In ILO C. 182 and in comments from the ILO Committee of Experts, the terms “programs” and “plans of action” are often used interchangeably. Indeed, in some cases, it is difficult to distinguish among “a policy,” “a plan,” and “a program.” (6; 58) For the TDA Conference Committee report, a policy on child labor is defined as a framework that lays out general principles that are intended to guide a government’s actions on child labor. Although policies may call for the passage of new laws and the establishment of new programs, the actual adoption of laws and program implementation are reported in the “Legal Framework for the Worst Forms of Child Labor” or the “Social Programs to Address Child Labor” sections of the profiles.

Specifically, ILAB assesses whether governments have achieved the following activities:

- Established specific child labor policies, any related development policies that explicitly incorporate the issue of child labor, or any related development policies that do not explicitly target child labor but that could have an impact on the problem (because so few governments distinguish between worst forms of child labor and child labor, any policy on child labor, whether targeted toward the worst forms of child labor or not, may be reported).
- Ensured that these policies include specific action plans, assign responsibilities, establish goals, and set timetables.
- Implemented established policies and plans.

Section VI: Social Programs to Address Child Labor

The sixth section of each country profile provides information on the fifth criterion in the TDA Conference Committee report—whether social programs exist in the country, “to prevent the engagement of children in the worst forms of child labor and assist in the removal of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor.” (73) This section of the country profile reports on key programs focused on child labor and the worst forms of child labor because countries often do not distinguish between the two when creating child labor programs. This section of the profile also reports on programs that focus on child labor specifically, and programs that address poverty, education, and other related matters that could have a beneficial impact on child labor. Only programs launched or implemented during the reporting period are included in this section.

ILAB generally considers the implementation of projects through international organizations to be government efforts because the projects can be carried out only with the consent of the government, and such efforts are sometimes considered part of a country’s national budget.

ILAB applies the standards embodied in Articles 6 and 7 of ILO C. 182 to assess country programs to combat child labor. ILO R. 190 also is considered to determine the types of efforts that governments might make, such as giving special attention to girls, providing training to employers and workers, and raising awareness. With this in mind, ILAB assesses whether governments have taken the following actions:

- Participated in any social programs to combat child labor, including programs aimed at directly preventing and withdrawing children from participation in child labor.
- Implemented social programs with sufficient resources to combat the scope and magnitude of the child labor problem at issue.
- Targeted at-risk populations.
- Implemented social programs successfully and sustainably.

Section VII: Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

The last section of the country profile is a set of suggested actions. These suggested actions serve as a roadmap of efforts that individual countries can follow to more fully address the worst forms of child labor. When the same suggested action has been provided in successive years, the years in which it was previously provided are listed in the table.

Framework for Country Assessments

Objective for Country Assessments

ILAB is using an assessment tool to clearly indicate and highlight the status of efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by each country that benefits from U.S. trade preferences.

Research Question Guiding Country Assessments

The assessment answers the question “To what extent did the beneficiary country advance efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor during the reporting period?”

Scope of Country Assessment

As discussed, the TDA Conference Committee report outlines the following six criteria that the President is asked to consider in determining whether a country is implementing its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor:

- Whether the country has adequate laws and regulations proscribing the worst forms of child labor
- Whether the country has adequate laws and regulations for the implementation and enforcement of such measures

- Whether the country has established formal institutional mechanisms to investigate and address the worst forms of child labor
- Whether the country has a comprehensive policy for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor
- Whether social programs exist in the country to prevent the engagement of children in the worst forms of child labor and assist in the removal of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor
- Whether the country is making continual progress toward eliminating the worst forms of child labor

The country assessment tool is intended to inform the sixth criterion—whether the country is “making continual progress toward eliminating the worst forms of child labor.” (73) In preparing the assessments, ILAB evaluates the first five criteria, grouping them into the same five areas addressed in the individual country profiles: laws and regulations, enforcement, coordination, policies, and social programs. The assessment is based on an analysis of the status of each country’s efforts in these five areas considered as a whole and compared to the country’s prior efforts. The assessments do not take into account the impact of government actions on the problem, or whether they have a documented effect on eliminating child labor. This type of analysis would require rigorous impact evaluations and assessments based on data from solid research designs, which is beyond the scope of this report. It is important to note that the assessment is not intended to reflect a determination of “whether a country has implemented its commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.” That determination is reserved for the President.

Method for Determining a Country Assessment

Each country profile in this report identifies a set of suggested actions for governments to take to advance efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The implementation—or lack of implementation—of these suggested actions establishes a baseline or point of reference from which to assess a country’s advancement. These actions, in combination with other efforts undertaken by a country, were considered when assessing the level of a country’s advancement during the current reporting period and in comparison with the previous reporting period.

After identifying and assessing a country’s efforts, ILAB considers the significance of the efforts undertaken during the reporting period—actions that could have an impact on eliminating the worst forms of child labor—and the extent to which these efforts addressed the first five TDA criteria, outlined above, in a limited or meaningful manner during the reporting period. In addition, ILAB reviews whether the government established or failed to remedy a regressive or significantly detrimental law, policy, or practice that delayed advancement in eliminating child labor. Finally, ILAB also examines whether countries had a policy or demonstrated a practice of being *complicit in forced child labor* in more than isolated incidents at the national, regional, or local level.

To promote consistency and transparency, and to operationalize these first five TDA criteria, each country’s efforts are analyzed according to a uniform set of guidance questions related to the five general areas of laws and regulations, enforcement, coordination, policies, and social programs. Detailed information is given in “TDA Guidance Questions.”

Appendix 9

TDA Guidance Questions

Assessment Level

TDA Conference Report Criterion:

- Whether the country is making continual progress toward eliminating the worst forms of child labor

Guidance Questions

- What efforts did the country make to address child labor during the year?
- Has the government instituted minimally acceptable laws and regulations, mechanisms, and programs to address and prevent child labor?
- Did the government of the country establish or fail to remedy a regressive or significantly detrimental law, policy, or practice that delayed advancement in the elimination of child labor?*
- Was the government of the country complicit in the use of forced child labor in more than isolated incidents?*

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor

Guidance Questions

- Were government officials complicit in the use of forced child labor in more than isolated incidents?*
- What are the prevalent types of child labor in each country?
- Has the government conducted research on the prevalence and nature of the worst forms of child labor and made the results publicly available?
- Are specific populations vulnerable to child labor due to gender, race, ethnicity, origin, disability, language, or socio-economic status?

- Were there events during the year that destabilized the country, such as armed conflict; health epidemics and natural disasters; or other social, economic, and political crises?

* A “Yes” response likely means that the country will automatically receive an assessment of *Minimal Advancement* or *No Advancement*.

Legal Framework for the Worst Forms of Child Labor

TDA Conference Report Criterion:

- Whether the country has adequate laws and regulations proscribing the worst forms of child labor

Guidance Questions

- Did the laws meet international standards?
- Is the minimum age for admission to employment in line with ILO C. 138?
- Is the minimum age for admission to hazardous work in line with ILO C. 138 and C. 182?
- Are criminal prohibitions on forced child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and use of children in illicit activities in line with ILO C. 182?
- Is the prohibition against recruitment of children under age 18 for state compulsory military service in line with ILO C. 182 and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict?
- Is the minimum age for recruitment into state voluntary military service in line with the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict?
- Is the prohibition against recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups in line with ILO C. 182?

- Does the age up to which education is compulsory align with the minimum age for work and meet the standards in ILO C. 138?
- Is the provision of free public basic education in line with ILO C. 182?
- If the law permits light work, is the minimum age in line with ILO C. 138 and are there appropriate safeguards as outlined in ILO C. 138?
- Has the country ratified ILO C. 182 and C. 138, as well as other relevant conventions and protocols?
- If the country's laws are not compliant with international standards embodied in ILO C. 138 and C. 182, has there been any change in the laws that brings the country closer to being fully compliant?
- Are laws related to child labor available to the public?
- Did the country establish or fail to remedy a regressive or significantly detrimental law that delayed its advancement in the elimination of child labor?*

* A "Yes" response likely means that the country will automatically receive an assessment of *Minimal Advancement* or *No Advancement*.

Enforcement of Laws on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

TDA Conference Report Criteria:

- Whether the country has adequate laws and regulations for the implementation and enforcement of such measures
- Whether the country has established formal institutional mechanisms to investigate and address the worst forms of child labor

In this section of the country profiles, ILAB analyzes whether, or to what degree, a country has defined enforcement agency roles, conducted routine and targeted inspections, and unannounced inspections,

and investigated and addressed complaints related to allegations of the worst forms of child labor. The analysis is based on the following guidance questions.

Guidance Questions

- Does the country have a labor inspectorate?
- Does the country have labor inspectors? Are its labor inspectors public servants as opposed to contractors?
- What was the amount of funding for the labor inspectorate? Was there an increase or decrease in the funding and resources to enforce child labor laws and regulations, and were these resources adequate given the incidence of child labor in the country?
- Was there an increase or reduction in the number of labor inspectors to enforce child labor laws and regulations, and was the number of labor inspectors adequate given the size of the country's workforce?
- Did the country offer initial training to new labor inspectors and investigators, including specialized training on child labor; training on new laws related to child labor, including its worst forms; and refresher courses?
- Did the labor inspectorate fail to conduct labor inspections during the reporting period?*
- Does the labor inspectorate lack legal authorization to conduct unannounced inspections?*
- Did the inspectorate conduct unannounced inspections?
- Did the government develop and implement a labor inspection strategy that allowed for different types of onsite inspections of worksites, such as routine, targeted, complaint-driven, or unannounced?
- Were inspections conducted with sufficient frequency and in all relevant sectors?

- Did the government provide the labor inspectorate with sufficient authority to sanction child labor violations?
- Did the country make available information on labor law enforcement efforts related to child labor, including the number of labor inspections conducted at worksites and by desk review, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected?
- Does the government have a mechanism for filing and resolving complaints expeditiously regarding child labor?
- Does a reciprocal referral mechanism exist between labor and criminal authorities and social services?
- Did the government investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence cases of violations of criminal child labor statutes, including public officials who participate in or facilitate the worst forms of child labor?
- Did the government impose penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor?
- Did the country make available information on criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, including the number of investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and penalties imposed?
- Did the government establish or improve a process for information sharing among enforcement authorities?
- Did the government ensure that all children engaged in the worst forms of child labor were protected from inappropriate incarceration, penalties, or physical harm?
- Did the country establish or fail to remedy a regressive or significantly detrimental law enforcement practice that delayed its advancement in the elimination of child labor?*

* A “Yes” response likely means that the country will automatically receive an assessment of *Minimal Advancement* or *No Advancement*.

Coordination of Government Efforts on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

TDA Conference Report Criterion:

- Whether the country has established formal institutional mechanisms to investigate and address complaints relating to allegations of the worst forms of child labor

In this section of the country profiles, ILAB analyzes whether, or to what degree, the country has an institution charged with coordinating overall efforts to combat child labor, including its worst forms. The analysis is based on the following guidance questions.

Guidance Questions

- Does the government have an agency or committee created to coordinate government efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor? Did it create such an agency or committee during the reporting period?
- Does the agency or committee address all sectors of child labor that are prevalent in the country, or does it address only certain sectors?
- Did such an agency or committee meet regularly and take actions, or did it not meet regularly and take few or no actions?

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

TDA Conference Report Criterion:

- Whether the country has a comprehensive policy for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor

Guidance Questions

- Did the government establish any new policies or plans that specifically address the worst forms of child labor or any one of the worst forms of child labor?

- Did the government incorporate the worst forms of child labor specifically as an issue to be addressed in poverty reduction, development, educational, or other social policies, such as poverty reduction strategy papers?
- If the country established any of the above policies or plans, do they designate responsibilities, establish goals, and set timelines?
- Did the government effectively implement existing policies and plans?
- Did the country establish or fail to remedy a regressive or significantly detrimental policy that delayed its advancement in the elimination of child labor?*

* A “Yes” response likely means that the country will automatically receive an assessment of *Minimal Advancement* or *No Advancement*.

Social Programs to Address Child Labor

TDA Conference Report Criterion:

- Whether social programs exist in the country to prevent the engagement of children in the worst forms of child labor and assist in the removal of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor

Guidance Questions

- Did the government fund or participate in any new or ongoing programs that aim to eliminate or prevent the worst forms of child labor?
- Did the government fund or participate in any social protection programs that could reasonably be expected to have an impact on child labor? Were any of the country’s programs shown, through research, to have had an impact on child labor?

- Did the government make efforts to reduce children’s vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor by addressing factors such as
 - ◆ country- and region-specific practices that make children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, and
 - ◆ barriers to education, such as a lack of teachers; lack of schools or inadequate facilities; lack of infrastructure to access schools; lack of transportation; violence, including physical and sexual abuse; birth registration requirements; and the charging of school fees?
- Are the country’s programs sufficient to combat particular forms of child labor, considering the scope and magnitude of those problems?
- Do the programs provide services directly to children?
- Do the programs adequately target at-risk populations?
- Were the programs fully funded?
- Are the programs meeting their goals?
- Are the program efforts sustainable?
- Did existing government programs improve or worsen in quality or effectiveness compared with the previous year?
- Did the country establish or fail to remedy a regressive or significantly detrimental social program or other practice that delayed its advancement in the elimination of child labor?*

* A “Yes” response likely means that the country will automatically receive an assessment of *Minimal Advancement* or *No Advancement*.

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Students at the Misael Pastrana School, where about 70 percent of the students are Venezuelans who cross the border every morning to attend class. Cúcuta, Colombia. April 24, 2019.

Country Profiles

In 2022, Afghanistan made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The humanitarian crisis following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 resulted in an increase in the prevalence of child labor, including its worst forms, and exacerbated existing child labor risks for girls. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, drought conditions, and worsening economic conditions further exacerbated child labor, child marriage, and child trafficking in the country. During the reporting period, the Taliban actively recruited and used children as part of their security forces. Furthermore, authorities considered some child trafficking victims, especially those engaged in bacha bazi or in armed conflict, as criminals, housing them in juvenile detention centers and subjecting them to torture and other forms of ill treatment rather than referring them to victim support services. Children in Afghanistan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict, forced labor in the production of bricks and carpets, and commercial sexual exploitation. The government lacks a mechanism to impose penalties for child labor violations and sufficient programs to address situations of child labor or prevent its occurrence. In addition, Afghan law does not sufficiently criminalize forced labor, debt bondage, or the commercial sexual exploitation of girls.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Afghanistan.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	12.0 (1,206,134)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	36.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		84.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Income, Expenditure and Labour Force Survey (IE&L), 2019–2020. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including harvesting poppies (3-6)
	Herding (3-5)
Industry	Carpet weaving† (3,5-7)
	Construction, including gravelling, paving, and painting (3-7)
	Coal, gold, and salt mining† (5,6)
	Brickmaking (3-9)
	Working in metal workshops, including in the production of doors, windows, and water tanks (4-6)
	Working as tinsmiths and welders† (4,7)
Services	Domestic work (6,10,11)
	Transporting water and goods, including across international borders (6,12)
	Street work, including peddling, vending, shoe shining, carrying goods, and begging (4-6)
	Collecting garbage† (4-6)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Washing cars (4,5,7)
	Selling goods in stores (4,5,7)
	Collecting and selling firewood (4,13)
	Repairing automobiles (4,14)
	Tailoring in garment workshops (4,6,9)
	Pushing loads on a wheelbarrow (<i>krachiwani</i>) (4,7)
	Working as waiters in restaurants (4,5,7,15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced domestic work (5,6,10,16)
	Commercial sexual exploitation (4-6,16,17)
	Forced labor in begging and the production of bricks and carpets, and for use as assistant truck drivers (15-19)
	Forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including for terrorist activities and suicide bombings (5,16,20-22)
	Recruitment of children by state armed groups for use in armed conflict (6,16,20,23-25)
	Use in illicit activities, including in pickpocketing and in the production and trafficking of drugs (3-6,15-17,19)
	Weapons trafficking (5,16)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

The humanitarian crisis following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 resulted in an increase in the prevalence of child labor, including its worst forms. (5,6,26-28) In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, drought conditions, and worsening economic conditions further exacerbated child labor, child marriage, and child trafficking in the country. (5,6,16,23,26,29,30) Of all the sectors in which Afghan children work, carpet weaving is the sector with the largest number of child laborers, particularly girls between the ages of 11 and 15. (5,31) Many of these children suffer respiratory ailments. (28,32)

Children in Afghanistan are recruited and used as child soldiers. (6,16,24) According to the UN, the Taliban has dramatically increased the number of child soldiers in their ranks. (6) Dire economic conditions have made children more vulnerable to recruitment. The Taliban usually recruits boys between the ages of 14 and 17, and 97 percent of these become part of the Taliban’s security forces. (6,16,23,25) In 2021, the Haqqani Network, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-I Islami, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Khorasan Province all recruited child soldiers in Afghanistan. However, research was unable to confirm if this practice continued in 2022. (16,33) Additionally, in recent years, low rates of birth registration and the falsification of identity documents contributed to the prevalence of child soldiers by making it difficult to determine a recruit’s age. (34) Observers reported that some officials accepted bribes to produce false identity documents indicating that the recipient boys were older than age 18. (17,34)

Boys in Afghanistan continued to be subjected to commercial sexual exploitation through the practice of *bacha bazi*, which typically entails keeping a male or transgender child for the purpose of sexual gratification. (5,6,16) Some boys were sold into the practice by their families or abducted from the street, including by police officers. (16,35) Children subjected to *bacha bazi* often become further victimized by the threat of violence when returning to their families, necessitating the placement of these child victims in rehabilitation centers. (5) The suspension of international aid after August 2021 significantly impacted *bacha bazi* victims’ access to rehabilitation services. (6,26,36) According to media and NGO reports, many of these cases went unreported or were referred to traditional mediation, which often allowed perpetrators to re-offend. Cases were further under-reported because the stigma associated with these crimes prevented the vast majority of child victims from bringing cases forward to law enforcement or seeking care, especially when the alleged perpetrators were members of the police force. (6,37)

Girls from impoverished families are forced into marriage with adult men in order for the girls’ families to obtain dowries. These girls are often subsequently forced into carpet weaving and required to provide their earnings to







their husbands. (5,6,16,26,38,39) Girls are also sold to men in India, Iran, and Pakistan and subsequently exploited sexually or in domestic servitude. (16) Meanwhile, girls from China, Iran, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Tajikistan are sometimes trafficked to Afghanistan for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. (16,40) Most human trafficking victims in Afghanistan are children, some of whom are forced into brick production or the production of illegal drugs to settle family debts. (5,16,22) Boys, especially those traveling unaccompanied, are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking, including for work in agriculture and construction. (41,42) Children's families may pay intermediaries to send children for labor abroad, where they are subsequently subjected to labor and sex trafficking in Iran, Pakistan, and parts of Europe. (43)

During the reporting period, and due to the effects of poverty and on-going military conflict, roughly half of Afghanistan's children did not attend school; as many as 1.9 million children either engaged in or were subjected to work. Moreover, after August 2021, school-age girls were not allowed to attend classes beyond the sixth grade in most provinces. (5,6,30,44) During the reporting period, the Taliban further banned Afghan girls and women from attending university. (6,45) The requirement for women to be escorted by male relatives (mahram) continues not only to impact women and girls' freedom of movement but also inhibits their access to education. (6,46) In some cases, girls faced deliberate militant attacks against their community and girls' schools, limiting their access to education. (47,48) Additional barriers to education for children included displacement of populations due to conflict, the use of schools as military bases, living long distances from schools, school-related fees, lack of security, lack of female teachers in girls' schools, and the lack of identity documentation. (6,19,23,48-50)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

Afghanistan has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Afghanistan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of criminal prohibitions against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	18	Article 13 of the Labor Law (51)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 13 and 120 of the Labor Law; Article 613 of the Penal Code; Article 63 of the Law on Protection of Child Rights (51-53)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Prohibited Jobs for Child Laborers; Article 613 of the Penal Code (52,54)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 4 of the Labor Law; Articles 510–512 of the Penal Code; Article 37 of the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (51,52,55)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 510–512 of the Penal Code (52)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 18.2 of the Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women; Articles 510–512, 650, and 652–667 of the Penal Code (52,55)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		List of Prohibited Jobs for Child Laborers; Articles 1, 7, and 23 of the Counter Narcotics Law (54,56)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 605–608 of the Penal Code (52)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 510–512 of the Penal Code (52)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 17 of the Education Law; Article 609 of the Penal Code (52,57)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 17 of the Education Law (57)

* Country has no conscription (58)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (59)

The Taliban have not made a clear pronouncement on whether the group would follow modified versions of either Afghanistan’s 1964 or 2004 constitution until it produces a new constitution, making it unclear the degree to which prior elements of the legal system remain in effect. Simultaneously, the Taliban have conveyed that prior laws remain in effect unless they violate the Taliban interpretation of *sharia*, as determined by Taliban courts. (60)

The Afghan Labor Law’s minimum age provision prohibits those who have not completed age 18 from being “recruited as a worker.” (51) However, the law defines “worker” as a person who is “recruited based on a definite contract,” meaning that the minimum age provision does not apply to those in informal employment. Afghan law does not sufficiently criminalize practices similar to slavery, including debt bondage. (51,52) The Penal Code criminalizes the use of male or transgender children in *bacha bazi*, criminalizes forcing children to dance, and criminalizes the forced use of girls in prostitution. However, the legal framework does not criminalize the use of boys or non-forced use of girls in prostitution, and it does not criminalize the use of children in pornographic performances other than dancing. (52,53,55)

Children in Afghanistan are required to attend school only up to age 15. This standard makes children between the ages of 15 and 17 vulnerable to child labor, as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work without restriction on hours and times of work. (51,52,57)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Child Protection Action Network (CPAN)	Operates as a coalition of agencies, NGOs, and community and religious leaders. Receives complaints of child labor, investigates such cases, refers victims to NGO and government shelters that provide social services, provides case management services, and issues warnings or refers criminal cases to the Attorney General's Office (AGO). (19,61) Not all provinces have a CPAN chapter. The capacity of CPAN chapters is not uniform or based on need, and the type of intervention depends on members of a particular CPAN chapter and resources available. (15) In addition, a person wishing to file a complaint to the CPAN must specify in writing the precise legal statute for the labor violation, making it nearly impossible for most citizens to report labor law offenses. (61) Limited training and resources also hinder prompt government response to complaints about child labor. (19) Research was unable to determine whether the networks remained active during the reporting period.
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA)	Responds to complaints of child labor, child trafficking, and child sexual exploitation; refers cases to the AGO and NGO shelters; and operates a shelter for human trafficking victims in Kabul. (15) Research was unable to determine whether the Kabul shelter remained in operation.
Ministry of Interior	Enforces laws related to child trafficking, the use of children in illicit activities, and child sexual exploitation. (15) Research was unable to determine enforcement activities undertaken during the reporting period.

The extent to which relevant agencies are carrying out the enforcement activities mandated by the pre-August 15, 2021, government—or whether these agencies continue to exist at all—is unknown. (6)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan took actions to address child labor. (5)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (62)	No (6)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (5)	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (62)	Unknown (6)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (5)	No (6)

In 2022, information about the number of labor inspectors was unavailable. Before the takeover by the Taliban, government officials, NGOs, and UNICEF acknowledged that the number of labor inspectors was insufficient; this likely remains the case. (19) Moreover, sources indicate that labor inspections took place only in the capital, Kabul, prior to the Taliban takeover. It is unclear whether inspections continued after the Taliban takeover in August 2021; the international community did not supply support to labor inspectors after that time. (6,19,30) Although Afghanistan's labor code designates the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) as the entity with labor law enforcement authority, before mid-2021, the Ministry lacked implementing regulations and labor law enforcement funding, leaving inspectors with no mechanism to assess penalties and without offices equipped with modern technologies and means of transportation, limiting their ability to carry out inspections. (48)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan took actions to address child labor.

Afghanistan

NO ADVANCEMENT

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (5)	Unknown (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (5)	No (6)

After August 2021, the United Nations confirmed the continued presence of unknown numbers of children detained without regard for age with adults in prisons and juvenile rehabilitation centers. Although reports confirm the Taliban has detained and punished children found engaged in child labor, research was unable to verify the conditions of these detentions and the scope of punitive measures imposed. (6,23)

Prior to the Taliban takeover, child victims of human trafficking were routinely prosecuted and convicted of unlawful acts that traffickers compelled them to commit—and this practice is likely to have continued during the reporting period. (6,16,17) Male victims of child trafficking, especially those engaged in *bacha bazi* or in armed conflict, were sometimes referred to juvenile detention or rehabilitation facilities on criminal charges, instead of being referred to appropriate victim support services. (17,19,21,63) Under the Ghani administration, the government arrested, detained, and prosecuted for terrorism-related crimes children younger than age 12 who had been forcibly recruited by non-state armed groups. Furthermore, authorities housed some child trafficking victims in juvenile detention centers, sometimes for several years. (49) Such children were considered criminals even after being transferred to rehabilitation centers. (17,35) In past years, the UN reported that some of these children were subjected to torture and ill treatment. (63,64)

In 2022, research was unable to determine whether the Taliban carried out criminal investigations in alleged instances of human trafficking. In addition, security agencies and the Ministry of Justice did not have a reciprocal referral mechanism to ensure that child victims of human trafficking and other forms of child labor receive social services. (6,15,19)

The Taliban has said that the Ministry of Interior’s anti-trafficking in persons offices have been inoperable since the 2021 takeover, and that all computer systems, data, and staff in those offices are gone. These offices have yet to be restored as of the end of the reporting period. (5,6) Due to assistance restrictions, the international community has been able to provide only limited resources to support child trafficking victims. (6,30)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan has an established mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including lack of utilization of previously established coordinating bodies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission on Protection of Child Rights	Monitors and protects children's rights established under the Law on Protection of Child Rights and strengthens national coordination on child protection. Participants include representatives from the AGO, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Education, and other bodies. (65,66) Includes an inter-ministerial technical committee, chaired by the MoLSA Minister, to ensure that the Child Act is operational at the provincial and district levels. (65) Research was unable to determine whether this committee was active during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that may hinder efforts to address child labor, including lack of implementation of previously established policies and strategies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Labor Policies	The National Labor Policy includes objectives to eliminate the worst forms of child labor, such as those involving hazardous activities; to pass legislation prohibiting child labor; and to effectively enforce child labor laws. (68) The National Child Labor Strategy and Action Plan aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2025 and all child labor by 2030. Makes recommendations to improve social protections and oversight. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period. (69) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Action Plan	Organizes Afghanistan's response to human trafficking, including <i>bacha bazi</i> , with a three-pronged approach: mandates the National Child Protection Committee to find and respond to <i>bacha bazi</i> cases among Afghan civil servants; encourages the implementation of laws, the prevention of child recruitment, and the reporting of corruption by the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Directorate of Security; and oversees the production of annual or semiannual interagency progress reports on addressing trafficking in persons. (67) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
Protection Strategies Related to Child Labor	The National Strategy for Children at Risk creates a framework to provide social services to at-risk children and their families, and guides donors in contributing toward a comprehensive child protection system. Focuses specifically on working children, victims of child trafficking, child soldiers, and other children affected by conflict. (69) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period. The Policy for the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict protects children from recruitment and sexual exploitation in the armed forces and provides services to children rescued from engagement in armed conflict. Assigns the Ministry of Defense and the Afghan National Police (ANP) with monitoring that children's rights are safeguarded and coordinating with CPAN chapters and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. (70) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement policies related to child labor during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, Afghanistan had programs that include the goal of preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including lack of implementation.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Child Protection Units (CPUs) of the Afghan National Police (ANP)†	Units located within ANP recruitment centers to ensure that children are not recruited to join armed conflict. Operate in all provinces. (19) CPUs inspect <i>e-tazkeera</i> (ID cards) and compare them against the physical appearance of applicants; however, Afghanistan did not have sufficient CPU reporting channels to identify children, prevent them from joining the security forces, or provide shelter, services, and family reintegration. (71,72) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period or if CPUs are even possible following the Taliban takeover.
Juvenile Rehabilitation Center†	Provides educational, social, and psychological support, and vocational training in Kabul to children who were previously engaged in armed conflict. (73,74) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period.
Asia Regional Child Labor Program (2019–2023)	Funded by ILO and implemented with UNICEF and the Institute for Development Studies, works with Afghanistan to ensure that policies on child labor align with ILO conventions while strengthening local and national Plans of Action. Contains a special focus on internally displaced persons and returnee migrants, along with other groups vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking. (75) ILO stated that activities under this program within Afghanistan were suspended. (30)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program funded by the Government of Afghanistan prior to the Taliban takeover.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified for a future government that would advance the elimination of child labor in Afghanistan (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those engaged in informal employment.	2019 – 2022
	Increase the compulsory education age from 15 years old to 18 years old to align with the minimum age for work.	2022
	Ensure that all children, including girls, are required to attend school through the minimum age for work.	2022
	Criminalize the use of boys and girls for prostitution and pornographic performances.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that forced labor and debt bondage are criminally prohibited.	2015 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, number and type of child labor inspections, number of violations found, and number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2015 – 2022
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for violations of Afghan labor law.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators receive training on child labor.	2011 – 2022
	Simplify the child labor complaint mechanism to allow oral complaints and eliminate or waive the requirement that the individual filing a complaint must specify the legal grounds for the violation.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate conducts inspections in all sectors and throughout the country.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators are available and receive the necessary resources to enforce child labor laws, including adequate offices equipped with modern technologies and transportation to inspection sites.	2012 – 2022
	Establish a referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services and labor authorities and social services.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that child victims of human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor are correctly identified as victims and referred to appropriate social services, not arrested, detained, or subjected to mistreatment or torture.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that children are not recruited into armed groups or government-affiliated military entities, including by ending the falsification of identity documents.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including training for criminal investigators, number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Investigate, prosecute, and when appropriate, convict and sentence government officials complicit in facilitating the worst forms of child labor, such as <i>bachi bazi</i> and child soldier recruitment.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that coordinating bodies, such as the National Commission on Protection of Child Rights, are active and able to carry out their intended mandates, including by ensuring that detailed enforcement data are reported to appropriate coordination bodies and that meetings are held at the mandated intervals.	2017 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor such as the National Labor Policy, the National Child Labor Strategy and Action Plan, and the National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Action Plan, and publish results from activities implemented.	2016 – 2022
Social Programs	Institute a birth registration campaign so that age can be verified, and children can register for school.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor such as the Asia Regional Child Labor Program, deployment of Child Protection Units of the Afghan National Police, and the administration of Juvenile Rehabilitation Centers, and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022
	Institute programs to increase access to education and improve security in schools, particularly girls' schools.	2014 – 2022
	Build capacity for the government to have sufficient inter-governmental reporting channels for Child Protection Units to identify children, prevent them from joining the security forces, and refer them to shelter, social, and family reintegration services.	2020 – 2022

REFERENCES ON FILE

In 2022, Albania made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government continued to support the work of the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Court, which was established in 2019 and has the power to hear cases involving human trafficking if linked to organized crime (including cases involving children). Additionally, during the reporting period the government supported policies focused on improving children's rights, including the National Agenda for the Rights of the Child and the National Strategy on Education. However, children in Albania are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including use in illicit activities and forced begging, and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in scavenging, including scavenging for chromium near mines. Albania's legal framework governing child labor also does not explicitly prohibit using, procuring, or offering children for illicit activities.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Albania.

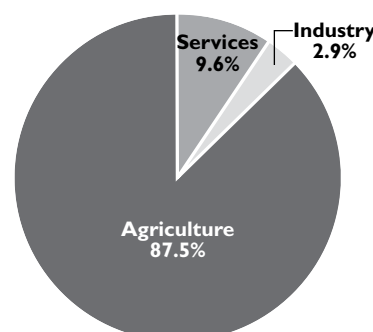
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.6 (23,665)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	5.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		100.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Child Labor Survey (SIMPOC), 2010. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3-5)
Industry	Scavenging near mining sites,† including for chromium and iron (5-8)
	Construction, activities unknown (1,7,16)
	Working in the textile, garment, and footwear sectors (4,5,10,11)
	Processing fish (5,12)
Services	Begging (5,13-15)
	Street work, including vending, washing vehicles, busking, and shining shoes (7,9,21-23)
	Collecting recyclable materials on the street and in landfills (5,7,20,23)
	Working in wholesale and retail trade (1,7)
	Working in hotels and restaurants (1,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Working in call centers (7,9,16)
	Use in illicit activities, including burglary, drug trafficking, and harvesting and processing cannabis (5,13,20,21)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,22,23)
	Forced begging (8,24-27)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Children are sometimes forced into labor, such as begging and scavenging. (8,22,25) To contribute to family income, some Roma and Balkan Egyptian children are forced to engage in street begging or the collection of recyclables. (5,26) In addition, some children informally scavenge chromium around hazardous mines where debris from mine tunnels is found, and they sometimes carry these heavy rocks for miles. (5) Children are also subjected to trafficking, both domestic and abroad to EU countries, for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. (8,22,25) Domestic child trafficking and forced begging have continued in recent years, particularly during the tourist season. (8,22,24) Albania lacks recent, comprehensive data on child labor, including in the agriculture and construction sectors. (5)

Children in Albania face a number of barriers to accessing education, which increases their vulnerability to child labor. (5) Although Albania allows children without a birth certificate to enroll in public schools, some children from Roma and Balkan Egyptian families and refugees without proper birth documentation may still face obstacles in obtaining access to social services and education. (5) Roma and Balkan Egyptian children also experience discrimination in schools when placed in separate classrooms, and faced other hurdles to accessing education, such as a lack of access to reliable transportation. (5,27) In addition, some migrant and refugee children from Syria, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh face difficulties accessing education due to language barriers. (8) Children with disabilities also continue to experience discrimination and other hurdles to accessing inclusive education. (5,28)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Albania has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Albania's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the failure to prohibit the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 98 of the Code of Labor; Article 24 of the Law for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (29,30)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 98–101 of the Code of Labor; Article 24 of the Law for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (29,30)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 99–101 of the Code of Labor; Decree of the Council of Ministers on Defining Hazardous and Hard Works; Article 34 of the Law on Occupational Safety and Health at Work; Regulation on Protection of Children at Work (28,29,31,32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 8 of the Code of Labor; Articles 124b and 128b of the Criminal Code (32,36)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 128/b of the Criminal Code (34)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 114, 117, and 128/b of the Criminal Code; Article 26 of the Law for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (30,34)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 129 of the Criminal Code; Articles 24 and 25 of the Law for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (30,34)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 9 of the Law on Military Service (35)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 9 of the Law on Military Service (35)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 28 of the Law for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (30)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 22 of the Law on Pre-University Education System (36)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 57 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania; Article 5 of the Law on Pre-University Education System (36,37)

* Country has no conscription (34)

Albania does not explicitly prohibit using, procuring, or offering children under age 18 for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. Article 129 of the Criminal Code only prohibits inducing or encouraging children under age 14 to participate in criminality. (33) Additionally, Article 25 of the Law for the Protection of the Rights of the Child provides for protection of children against the use of alcohol and drugs, as well as the illicit production and trafficking of these substances, but does not criminalize inducing a child to participate in these acts. (30) The law also does not criminally prohibit the use of children for prostitution. (33)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Finance and Economy (State Inspectorate for Labor and Social Services)	Enforces laws related to child labor and receives and responds to child labor complaints through the State Social Services Agency. (5) The 241 Child Protection Units (CPUs) located throughout the country at the municipal level identify at-risk children, conduct initial evaluations of each case, and refer children to appropriate social services. (5,37)
Ministry of Interior	Enforces laws related to the worst forms of child labor through protection officers. (28) Coordinates operations of the Border Police and each of the Illicit Human Trafficking sections in the country's 12 Regional Police Directorates through the General Directorate of State Police. (3,4) Establishes the government's policy on addressing human trafficking through the State Committee Against Trafficking in Persons, chaired by the Interior Minister. (28,42)
Office of the Prosecutor General	Investigates and prosecutes child trafficking cases through the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Court. (8)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Albania took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including

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lack of authority to inspect informal work locations such as private farms and unregistered businesses.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,700,000 (7)	\$1,550,000 (43)
Number of Labor Inspectors	131 (7)	124 (43)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (31)	Yes (38)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (7)	Yes (43)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	4,973 (7)	9,273 (43)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	4 (7)	10 (43)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (7)	2 (43)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (7)	2 (43)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (43)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (7)	Yes (43)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (29)	Yes (38)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (43)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (7)	Yes (43)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (43)

In 2022, inspectors received training on regulations related to the employment of minors. (8) Inspectors determined that the tourism sector continued to contribute to children working as street vendors, particularly in Durres and Vlore. (8,22) The State Inspectorate for Labor and Social Services (SILSS) also developed an online tool to improve transparency around penalties, particularly when a fine can be issued and the amount of the fine. Although SILSS can inspect registered private entities, it cannot inspect private homes, private farms, or unregistered businesses. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, the government's criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (39)	Yes (44)
Number of Investigations	68 (7)	44‡ (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	25 (5)	19‡ (8)
Number of Convictions	15 (5)	14‡ (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	15 (7)	14 (44)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (44)

‡ Includes data from January 2022 to September 2022.

If a child victim of labor exploitation is identified during the course of a labor inspection, then the agency conducting the inspection first refers the child to the police and state social services, then to an anti-trafficking shelter. (5,40) The case may also be referred to local Child Protection Units (CPUs), which can then connect the child to social services. (5,37,40,41) During the reporting period, the state police continued to investigate the trafficking of minors in collaboration with the 12 regional police directorates. Additionally, criminal law enforcement authorities received multiple trainings on anti-trafficking efforts and new criminal legislation regarding the treatment of minor victims of human trafficking. (8)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including coordination among agencies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
State Agency for the Rights and Protection of Children	Oversees implementation of the government's child rights protection policies, including monitoring the National Agenda for the Rights of the Child. (5,42) Manages cases of at-risk children and refers them to appropriate social services. Sanctions authorities who fail to protect children from violence and exploitation. (5,37) Coordinates local and central efforts on health, security, and the education of children. (5) During the reporting period, the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of Children met with local Child Protection Units and ad-hoc Cross-Sectoral Technical Groups to improve the local bodies' ability to properly identify children at risk of exploitation. Additionally, the State Agency continued to coordinate regular annual meetings with child protection workers in all 61 municipalities. (8)

Coordination between SILSS and the Albanian State Police has traditionally been sporadic. (11,44,49)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Persons (2021–2023)	Calls for the identification and referral of child victims and those at risk of human trafficking to social protection services in accordance with standard operating procedures. (5) Increases the use of CPUs, police, and border control personnel to identify victims, including children involved in street work. Seeks to raise public awareness of all forms of human trafficking, including for forced labor. (5) Active during the reporting period. (8)
National Agenda for the Rights of the Child (2021–2026)	Aims to protect and promote children's rights by supporting physical and psychosocial development, and the social inclusion of children. (5,41) Other goals include eliminating all forms of violence against children and creating child-friendly systems and services in education, justice, health, and social protection. (5,41) Active during the reporting period. (8)
National Strategy on Education (2021–2026)	Aims to promote learning environments that are conducive to student well-being and preventing children from dropping out of school. (23) Active during the reporting period. (8)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (4,45,46)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Program of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (2022-2026) *	UN program that aims to increase access to education for vulnerable children and improve protections for child survivors of human trafficking. During the reporting period, the Government of Albania and the UN office in Albania signed a new commitment to continue working on economic and social reforms to improve the situation of vulnerable populations throughout the country. (8,47)
Cash Transfer Program (Ndhma Ekonomike) †	Government-funded cash transfer program that provides an allowance for families receiving economic aid through the Law on Social Assistance and Services. (4) During the reporting period, the government continued to provide regular cash payments to qualifying families. (48)
World Vision Albania Centers (Children's City Program) †	The municipalities of Durrës, Maliq, and Korçë collaborated with World Vision Albania to construct centers for children in high-risk situations, including violence, abuse, and various forms of exploitation. (48) During the reporting period, World Vision Albania continued to assist children who were previously in abusive situations. (8)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Albania.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (45)

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Research indicates that there is a lack of shelters for street children who are not victims of human trafficking, although some state- and NGO-run services were available for children who were forced to beg. (5) A lack of financial and human resources and issues related to the decentralization of social funds from the central government to municipalities were also cited as gaps in the efficient implementation of social programs. (4,45,50,51)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Albania (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that using, procuring, and offering children under age 18 for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs, are criminally prohibited.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the use of children in prostitution is criminally prohibited.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors can inspect the informal sector in which child labor is known to occur, including private homes, private farms, or unregistered businesses.	2010 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure proper coordination between the State Inspectorate for Labor and Social Services and the Albanian State Police.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish comprehensive data on the extent and nature of child labor in Albania. In particular, gather data on the prevalence and conditions of child labor in sectors of heightened concern, such as the agriculture and construction sectors.	2013 – 2022
	Provide adequate transportation resources for all children who face transportation-related barriers to school attendance, in particular Roma and Balkan Egyptian children and those who live in communities far from schools.	2011 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including children from Roma and Balkan Egyptian minority communities, children with disabilities, and children from Syria, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and elsewhere living in Albania as refugees or displaced migrants, by removing all school-related fees and ensuring that children without documentation do not face obstacles to enrolling in school.	2013 – 2022
	Provide translation services for all children, especially those from migrant or refugee families, who are facing language-related barriers to education.	2018 – 2022
	Increase the number of shelters for victims of the worst forms of child labor, in particular for unhoused children living and working in forced begging rings on the streets.	2017 – 2022
	Institute programs to assist children who are victims of human trafficking and those who are used in scavenging chromium.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that funding and human resources are increased for social programs for child labor and that decentralized social funds to municipalities are appropriately allocated to adequately carry out programs.	2018 – 2022

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In 2022, Algeria made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government drafted legislation to remove the requirement of proving force, fraud, or coercion in some circumstances for an act to be considered child trafficking; the law was approved by both chambers of parliament in April 2023 and will enter into force after its publication in the official gazette. The National Authority for the Protection and Promotion of Children also launched an online platform to increase coordination among civil society organizations working on child protection issues. However, children in Algeria are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced begging. Children also engage in street vending. Algerian law does not provide increased penalties for, or categorize as a separate crime, the involvement of children in either the production or trafficking of drugs. The government also has not determined by national law or regulation the types of work that are hazardous for children to perform. Moreover, while the labor inspectorate is authorized to conduct inspections in all workplaces, inspectors do not investigate some workplaces, such as houses or informal construction sites, without a complaint, resulting in instances of child labor going undetected.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Algeria. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	3.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		95.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2022, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018–19. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming (3)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown (3,4)
Services	Street work, including vending and begging (3,4,8)
	Domestic work (5)
	Working in small businesses, including mechanics’ shops and restaurants (3,6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4)
	Forced begging (3,4)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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School-aged children in Algeria generally attend school regularly, so jobs for children are often part time and informal in nature, with some children working in small-scale family-run businesses such as restaurants or small stores. (3,5-7) Children also work in informal street markets in street vending and begging. (3,4) In addition, sub-Saharan migrant children, including unaccompanied children, are sometimes exploited through commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging. (3,4) In 2022, the government continued to conduct a survey on child economic exploitation in cooperation with UNICEF; the study is not yet complete. (8-10)

The Algerian public education system is free and open to all children ages 6 to 16, regardless of ethnicity and nationality. School enrollment increased in 2022 as the COVID-19 pandemic protocols ended. (11) Despite universal access to education, schools in the southern regions of Algeria face attendance problems, with children as young as age 13 or 14 dropping out of school. (7,12) Non-Algerian children face other barriers to education such as required documentation of grade level or testing to determine their level. (5,7,12,13) Unlike in 2021, there were no reported cases of migrant children without valid documentation being denied enrollment by school administrators and reported to authorities in 2022. (6,8,10) In addition, migrants who do not speak Arabic, the language of instruction, face challenges in the Algerian education system, and some migrant families may also not be familiar with Algerian law granting free education to all children. (8,12) These informal barriers to education, specifically for migrant children, result in absence from school and contribute to increased vulnerability to child labor. (6,14,15)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Algeria has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Algeria's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibitions related to the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 15 of the Labor Code; Article 7 of Executive Decree No. 96-98 on the List and Content of Special Books and Registers Mandatory for Employers (16,17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 15 of the Labor Code; Article 7 of Executive Decree No. 96-98 on the List and Content of Special Books and Registers Mandatory for Employers (16,17)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 303 bis 4 of the Penal Code (18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 303 bis 4 and 319 bis of the Penal Code (18)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 2, 319, 333 bis I, 343, and 344 of the Penal Code (18)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 195 bis of the Penal Code (18)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 14 of Presidential Decree No. 08-134 on the National People's Army (19)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 3 of Law No. 14-06 on National Service (20)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 12 of Law No. 08-04 on National Education (21)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 13 of Law No. 08-04 on National Education (21)

The prohibitions against child trafficking in Algerian law are insufficient because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion for the crime of child trafficking to be established. (18) In April 2023, Algeria passed a law that largely removes the requirement of proving force, fraud, or coercion for the prosecution of child trafficking crimes, which will enter into force after publication in the national gazette. The law was approved by both chambers of parliament in April 2023 and will enter into force after publication in the official gazette. (12,22) However, the draft law still requires proof of force, fraud, or coercion when the exploitative purpose has not been achieved. (22) This law is insufficient to meet international standards regarding prohibition of child trafficking, as child trafficking must be criminalized without a requirement to prove force, fraud, or coercion, without exceptions.

The Labor Code prohibits anyone under age 19 from working at night and anyone under age 18 from performing work that is harmful to their health, safety, or morals. (16) However, Algeria has not determined by national law or regulation the types of work that are hazardous for children, and research did not determine whether the government commission tasked with proposing a list of hazardous professions continued to work on this issue in 2022. (3) Additionally, Algerian law does not provide increased penalties for, or categorize as a separate crime, the involvement of children in either the production or trafficking of drugs. (18)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security	Enforces labor laws, including laws related to child labor, through its labor inspectorate. Issues citations noting violations of labor laws and refers violations to the Ministry of Justice. (3) Supervises the application of laws and regulations related to labor relations, working conditions, and worker safety. (8) Refers children found in child labor to the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and the Condition of Women to ensure follow-up with social services. (3) Since 2003, chairs the Interministerial Committee against Child Labor involving 12 other government ministries. (10,23) In 2022, labor inspections were conducted in all 58 wilayas (states). (3)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes child exploitation cases, including those related to non-compliance with labor laws, through its Office of Criminal Affairs and Amnesty Procedures, the lead enforcement agency for human trafficking issues. (7,8,24) During legal proceedings, appoints a special judge familiar with the needs of minors if a child does not have a parent. (8) Also directs the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and the Condition of Women to conduct investigations into issues related to children and families. (8,25)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Criminal Enforcement Agencies	As directed by the Ministry of Justice, both the Directorate General for National Security (DGSN), which is part of the Ministry of Interior and Internal Assemblies, and the National Gendarmerie, which is part of the Ministry of National Defense, conduct child labor investigations and enforce criminal laws. DGSN investigates child labor in urban areas while the National Gendarmerie investigates such cases along the country's border and in rural areas. (3,26) DGSN comprises brigades of specialized police officers focused on illegal immigration and human trafficking. There are 61 brigades for the protection of minors or other vulnerable populations. (3,8,15,25) Both DGSN and the National Gendarmerie administer hotlines for the reporting of child abuse. The National Gendarmerie also maintains a website through which individuals can file complaints. In 2022, 1,780 potential child endangerment cases came through the National Gendarmerie's hotline, but it is not certain how many of these calls were related to child labor. (3,12)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Algeria took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of authority to inspect informal workplaces for child labor.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	709 (8)	619 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	153,537 (8)	165,406 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (8)	1 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (8)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (8)	No (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (3)

Although the labor inspectorate is authorized to conduct inspections in all workplaces, inspectors do not investigate informal workplaces, such as houses or informal construction sites, without a complaint. (3) The number of labor inspectors in Algeria dropped from 885 in 2020, to 709 in 2021, and to 619 in 2022. (3,8,24) Research indicates that Algeria does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (27,28)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Algeria took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, the lack of information provided by the government regarding its criminal law enforcement efforts makes the scope and effectiveness of these efforts difficult to determine.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (8)	67 (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (8)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (3)

Under Algerian law, penalties for crimes of the worst forms of child labor may include prison sentences, fines, or both. The government did not provide information on the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, or sentences imposed for those convicted of child labor crimes during the reporting period. (3) In 2022, the National Gendarmerie investigated 23 child labor violations involving 27 child victims. (10) Although the government did not provide the number of child labor prosecutions initiated in 2022, the Ministry of Justice reported prosecuting 75 child labor cases, some carrying over from previous years, and achieving 67 convictions. (3) Six child victims of human trafficking (five girls and one boy) were also identified during the reporting period. (26)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission for the Prevention of and Fight Against Child Labor	Under the direction of the National Authority for the Protection and Promotion of Children, protects and promotes children's rights and advocates for children in danger of economic exploitation. Acts as a liaison between the Ministry of Justice and members of the public alleging violations of children's rights. (3,8,29,30) Runs a national hotline and website to field questions and complaints about the mistreatment of children. (3) In 2022, launched an online platform for civil society organizations working on child protection issues so they can better coordinate their efforts. (3)

Trafficking of children is addressed specifically by the National Committee for Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The committee coordinates the activities of stakeholders involved in addressing human trafficking, develops the national anti-trafficking action plan, and provides training to relevant government authorities. (12)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a policy addressing all of the worst forms of child labor that exist within the country.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan for the Prevention of and Fight Against Trafficking in Persons (2022–2024)†	Aims to prevent and reduce human trafficking by raising awareness, strengthening legislation, prosecuting human trafficking crimes, improving the provision of protective services to survivors, and increasing collaboration with national and international NGOs. This plan continues activities of the 2019–2021 plan that could not be completed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (7,26,31)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

The Government of Algeria does not currently have a national action plan that addresses all worst forms of child labor. In 2019, the government drafted but did not finalize a national action plan that intended to promote and protect children's rights, including reducing child labor; the plan was not enacted during the reporting period. (3,10) An event was held in 2022 so that agencies, such as the National Authority for the Protection and Promotion of Children and the National Economic, Social and Environmental Council, along with other stakeholders from government and civil society organizations, could collaborate and develop recommendations for this plan. (11)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Children Assistance Facilities†	Facilities operated by the government to provide support for children, namely orphans and children in dangerous situations who are taken into custody by the state. (8) During the reporting period, 103 facilities operated across the country. (10)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Algeria.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms. (5,15,29)

Although Algeria has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children, forced begging, and street work.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Algeria (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws increase penalties for, or categorize as a separate crime, the involvement of children in all illicit activities, including using, procuring, and offering children for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2013 – 2022
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children under age 18, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law does not require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking, without exceptions.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on labor inspectorate funding.	2009 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 619 to 843 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 12.6 million people and allow for targeted inspections where child labor is likely occurring.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information on the criminal enforcement of child labor laws, including the number of investigations, prosecutions, penalties imposed, and penalties collected for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that inspections are conducted in all workplaces, including informal workplaces, such as houses or construction sites.	2021 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a national policy that includes all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and street work.	2015 – 2022
Social Programs	Research and publish detailed information on children involved in child labor or at risk of being involved; specify these activities, including those carried out in construction work; and publish information to inform policies.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that social programs address migrant children involved in rural family-run businesses and agricultural work, as well as those subjected to forced begging.	2020 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children, street work, and forced begging.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that isolated cases of school administrators denying enrollment to migrant children are stopped in accordance with laws allowing for free public education for all children.	2018 – 2022
	Take measures to remove barriers to education for migrant children, including language barriers, lack of specialized training, and transportation.	2015 – 2022
	Expand social programs to address school dropout rates in the southern region of the country.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Angola made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government updated the list of hazardous occupations and activities for children, including 52 activities, 39 of which were not found on the previous list. The Ministry of Public Administration, Labor, and Social Security conducted training workshops focused on capacity building for child protection stakeholders, and several trainings and workshops on human trafficking concepts were provided by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights to members of the Angolan diplomatic corps, national police, prosecutors, and all 18 provincial human rights committees. Additionally, the Multisectoral Commission on the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor established procedures to process and report child labor cases and strengthened its coordination with law enforcement and social services providers. However, children in Angola are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in construction. Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize practices similar to slavery or allow for the prosecution of debt bondage. Additionally, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Angola's workforce, and social programs do not target all sectors in which children work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Angola. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	15.1 (1,246,354)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	69.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	13.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2015–2016. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including plowing, harvesting, watering crops, picking fruits and vegetables, collecting <i>mahungo</i> caterpillars, and in the production of rice (3-9)
	Fishing, including artisanal fishing,† and cleaning fish for deep freezing or sun drying (6,7,10-12)
	Cattle herding and animal grazing (5,9,13)
	Production of charcoal (14)
Industry	Artisanal diamond mining (9,13)
	Mining coal (9)
	Construction,† including stone breaking,† loading stones on trucks, carpentry,† concrete production,† gravel road building, and making and transporting bricks (4,8,9,15,16)
	Working in animal slaughterhouses,† including processing cattle, goats, and pigs† (17)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including vending,† car washing, parking assistance, shoe shining, begging, recycling metals and plastics, garbage and scrap iron scavenging,† and transporting heavy loads† (6-9,13,15,18-20)
	Domestic work (3,6,13)
	Working in shops and markets (6,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,13,21-25)
	Forced labor in agriculture, brickmaking, construction, fisheries, artisanal diamond mining, and domestic work (13,25)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (6,13,25)
	Use in illicit activities, including for the transport of illicit goods across the border of Angola and Namibia, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (13)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Research indicates that incidences of child labor have increased in recent years, especially in the agriculture, construction, services, and industrial sectors. Research further indicates that in the province of Namibe, over 50,000 children work in the agricultural sector. (5,6,8) Due to widespread droughts in Cunene Province, children in some villages are forced to drop out of school to gather water, dig wells, and herd cattle. (13) Undocumented Congolese migrant children also enter Angola for work in diamond-mining districts, and some are subjected to forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation in mining camps. Girls as young as age 12 are subjected to human trafficking from Kasai Occidental in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Angola for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (13) Moreover, Angolan boys are taken to neighboring countries and forced to herd cattle or work as couriers to transport illicit goods. Reports also indicate that some adults force children younger than age 12 to commit crimes because children cannot be criminally prosecuted. (13)




Education is free up to the ninth grade; however, families often face difficulty in paying informal school fees, such as for textbooks, and at times, bribes requested by some education officials for new admissions or passing grades. (10,26,27) Further barriers to education for children include lack of classrooms and teachers. Despite research indicating that over 500 schools have been built in the last few years, many children remain outside of the educational system, and over 2 million school-age children in Angola do not attend school. (9,27-29) According to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2020–2022) report for Angola, 40 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 11 are not presently attending school, 18 percent have never been to school, and 19 percent do not have any level of education. For children between ages 12 and 17, almost half do not attend programs of secondary or vocational education corresponding to their age. (30) In addition, poor infrastructure, including the lack of sanitation facilities, disproportionately affects girls' attendance, especially at the secondary-school level. (9,29,31) Children in Angola are permitted to attend school only up to the sixth grade without a birth certificate; however, the government's "Massive Registration Campaign," conducted throughout all 18 provinces, resulted in the issuance of 5.1 million birth registration cards and 4.7 million identification cards between December 2019 and December 2021. (10,32)

Refugee children also face difficulties in continuing their education beyond age 11 since their status is directly connected to their parents' refugee cards, which are not accepted by secondary schools. Currently, a mechanism to apply for identity documentation does not exist, but the government is making efforts to address the issue and ensure that refugee children are not hindered from continuing their education. (10) In addition, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, in collaboration with UNHCR, is working on developing a national plan to address statelessness, which will provide a mechanism to ensure that children born to refugees in Angola receive birth certificates. (33)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Angola has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Angola's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections for children working outside formal employment relationships.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Articles 1, 2, and 254 of the Labor Law (34)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 3(21) and 256 of the Labor Law (34)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 256 of the Labor Law; Hazardous Work List (34,35)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Articles 71(j-l), 175, 177, 178, 180, and 383 of the Penal Code (36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 71(j-l), 175, 177, 178, 180, and 196 of the Penal Code (36)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 71(j-l) and 195–198 of the Penal Code (36)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 4 and 7 of the Drug Trafficking Law; Article 168(1b and 1d) of the Penal Code (36,37)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 11 of the Military Service Law (38)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of the Military Service Law (38)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 385(1c) of the Penal Code (36)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14	Articles 12, 27, and 31 of the Basic Law of the Education System (39)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 11 of the Basic Law of the Education System (39)

In 2022, the government approved an updated list of 52 hazardous activities and occupations prohibited to minors, 39 of which were not included on the previous list, such as construction, street vending, and lifting and transporting heavy loads; however, the updated list does not include diamond mining, a sector in which there is evidence of work conducted underground. (35) In addition, the law's minimum age protections do not apply to children working outside formal employment relationships, which is not in compliance with international standards that require all children to be protected by the law. (34,40) Moreover, laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize practices similar to slavery or allow for the prosecution of debt bondage. (36)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Public Administration, Labor, and Social Security (MAPTSS)	Enforces laws against child labor and coordinates the Multisectoral Commission on the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor. Fines employers or sends cases to the Ministry of Interior, through the Criminal Investigation Services (SIC), for further investigation, and to the Attorney General's Office for prosecution. (10) Employs labor inspectors in all 18 provinces to carry out inspections and joint operations with social services providers. (41)
Ministry of Interior's National Police	Enforce criminal laws and conduct operations and investigations related to the worst forms of child labor. Through SIC, collaborates with the Juvenile Court on child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and illicit recruitment investigations. (10)
Attorney General's Office	Investigates and prosecutes cases of the worst forms of child labor. (10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Angola took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Public Administration, Labor, and Social Security (MAPTSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	266 (33)	257 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (42)	Yes (42)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	9,088 (10)	8,296 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (10)	8 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	8 (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (42)	Yes (42)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (9)

In 2022, MAPTSS conducted training workshops to build the capacity of several stakeholders working on child protection issues, including the National Child Protection System, the National Children's Institute (INAC), Provincial and Municipal Departments of Social Action, the Ministry of Interior, and the Court of Minors. In total, approximately 176 individuals were trained, including labor inspectors, throughout six provinces. (9) However, although inspections were conducted throughout the country and in most sectors, no labor inspections were conducted in the informal sector, which consists of 75 percent of Angola's economic activity, and in which child labor is known to occur. (9) Furthermore, research indicates that Angola does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties, and reports indicate that MAPTSS considers the budget allocated for labor inspection activities to be insufficient. (9,43)

Inspectors from MAPTSS work with INAC and the Ministry of Social Action, Family, and the Advancement of Women (MASFAMU) to ensure that child labor victims receive the appropriate social services. (9) INAC refers children found during inspections to social services and ensures their legal rights. INAC, along with MASFAMU, coordinates complaints with the Criminal Investigation Services (SIC), which then refers investigated cases to the Children's Tribunal (*Julgado de Menores*). (9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Angola took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	3 (44)	Unknown (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown (9)
Number of Convictions	1 (44)	Unknown (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (44)	Unknown (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (9)

In 2022, the Government of Angola provided several trainings and workshops with a focus on human trafficking concepts to members of the Angolan diplomatic corps, national police officers, prosecutors, and all 18 provincial human rights committees. (45) However, reports indicate that training remains insufficient, particularly for investigators located outside the capital and in remote areas across the country. (46)

Child trafficking victims can be referred to MASFAMU-run shelters before a determination is made regarding their reintegration with their families or guardians. (9) INAC and MASFAMU use a network of 114 counseling and housing shelters to support victims and provide them with social services. (47) Reports indicate, however, that victims in rural areas have less access to social services than those in urban areas. (44)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including challenges with aggregating and synthesizing data on human trafficking cases.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Multisectoral Commission on the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor	Addresses all issues related to the worst forms of child labor and leads the drafting, implementation, and monitoring of national plans for the elimination of child labor, including the National Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labor. Led by the Minister of Public Administration, Labor, and Social Security, and includes representatives from the National Children's Institute (INAC), the Ministry of Social Action, Family, and the Advancement of Women (MASFAMU), and six other government agencies. (9) During the reporting period, established procedures on the measuring and reporting of child labor cases, as well as strengthening coordination with law enforcement and social services. In addition, conducted review of proposed updates to the Hazardous Work List. (9)

In 2022, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights strengthened mechanisms to protect children and women as the main victims of human trafficking in the country by creating a gender observatory, increasing awareness of reporting hotlines, and establishing a child protection system. In addition, the Interministerial Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons conducted several trainings and workshops throughout the reporting period and participated in various media outlet programs on human trafficking issues, including three on television and five on the radio. (45) Despite these efforts, reports indicate that the government faces challenges with aggregating and synthesizing data on human trafficking cases. (13,48)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labor (2021–2025)	Prioritizes effective, immediate, and integrated measures toward the promotion of children's rights, including through the prevention and eradication of child labor and its worst forms, by 2025. Focuses on seven principal areas: (1) child development; (2) social assistance; (3) education; (4) advocacy, accountability, and enforcement; (5) raising children's voices; (6) communication; and (7) monitoring and evaluation. (49) Each area provides specific objectives, including increasing access to education and vocational training, raising awareness of the problem at all levels of the community, strengthening relevant legal framework, and increasing the capacity of children's participation. (49) In 2022, the government began implementing the action plan, including through labor inspections and forced labor awareness campaigns. (45)
National Action Plan on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons (2020–2025)	Outlines Angola's strategy to address human trafficking, including domestic human trafficking, in a 5-year plan with the option of extension. Commits to specific activities designed to improve the prevention, protection and assistance, and prosecution components involved in addressing human trafficking. (50) In 2022, the government implemented the recently approved National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking and the Standard Operating Procedures for addressing human trafficking. (45)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (51)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Social Protection Programs†	National network of child support centers implemented by the government in coordination with NGOs, offering meals, shelter, basic education, and family reunification services to victims of crime, including child trafficking victims. MASFAMU and the Organization of Angolan Women operate 52 children's shelters that assist victims of child trafficking. (9) Active during the reporting period. (9)
Birth Registration and Justice for Children†	Government-run program making birth registration free for all Angolan citizens. (52) Ongoing throughout the reporting period. (9)
Mobile Schools and Free Meals for Children†	Ministry of Education program that provides education in mobile schools to migrant children who work with their parents in cattle herding. Specifically supports children at the highest risk of involvement in child labor in southern Angola. (46) Supports some mobile schools with kitchens, facilitating the free school meals program. (46) Active in 2022. (9)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Angola.

During the reporting period, the government conducted awareness and prevention campaigns against child sex tourism. INAC and MASFAMU also led child sexual exploitation awareness campaigns through radio and television public service announcements. (45) However, although Angola has implemented programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. Furthermore, research did not identify programs that seek to reach children subjected to certain worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Angola (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that minimum-age protections are extended to children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize practices similar to slavery and allow for the prosecution of debt bondage.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law prohibits hazardous occupations or activities for children in all relevant sectors in Angola, including in diamond mining.	2011 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information regarding labor inspectorate funding.	2011 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 257 to 376 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 15 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the Ministry of Public Administration, Labor, and Social Security receives adequate resources to conduct inspections in sectors in which child labor is known to occur, including in the informal sector.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that child trafficking survivors in rural areas have adequate access to social services.	2021 – 2022
	Increase training for criminal investigators, including training of investigators outside the capital and in remote areas across Angola.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information on the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Increase the government's capacity to aggregate and synthesize data on human trafficking cases.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Develop and expand existing social programs to ensure that all children have access to education and are not restricted by informal fees, lack of birth certificates, lack of teachers and classrooms, or poor school infrastructure.	2013 – 2022
	Institute programs to support children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor and expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that refugee children are not hindered from continuing their education beyond age 11 by creating a process for them to obtain identity documents.	2020 – 2022

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Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in Anguilla, in 2022, the government made no advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The law does not prohibit the involvement of children in illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, the minimum age of 12 for work and 14 for hazardous work does not meet international standards, and Anguilla lacks a list of prohibited hazardous occupations and activities for children.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides one key indicator on children's education in Anguilla.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Primary Completion Rate (%)		95.6




Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

British Overseas Territories recognize the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the UK but are not constitutionally part of the UK. They are self-governing, except in the areas of foreign affairs and defense. (3) Domestic UK law does not generally apply unless explicitly extended to Anguilla. Under Article 35(4) of the ILO Constitution, when the UK ratifies a Convention, the Territory must consider if it will accept the Convention. (3,4) If the Convention is accepted, it is considered applicable to that Territory. The following Convention has been extended to and accepted by Anguilla (Table 2).

Table 2. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The Government of Anguilla has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 3). However, gaps exist in Anguilla's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the failure to criminalize the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	12	Articles 1, 3, and 4 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 1 and 2 of the Employment of Children (Restriction) Act (5,6)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	14	Articles 1, 3, and 4 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 1 and 2 of the Employment of Children (Restriction) Act (5,6)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 6 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (5)

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Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 242 and 243 of the Criminal Code; Chapter I, Section 4 of the Constitution Order (7,8)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 242, 243, 247, and 248 of the Criminal Code (7)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 244 of the Criminal Code (7)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17	Article 117 of the Education Act (9)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 106 of the Education Act (9)

* Country has no conscription (3)

† Country has no standing military (10)

The minimum age of 12 for work does not meet international standards. The minimum age of 14 for hazardous work also does not meet international standards as it applies only to industrial undertakings, transportation of passengers or goods by roads or rail, and work on ships. (5,6) Anguilla lacks a list of prohibited hazardous occupations and activities for children. However, there is a prohibition of night work for children under age 16 in the manufacturing of raw sugar and a prohibition of night work in other industrial undertakings for children under age 18. (5) In addition, Anguilla's laws do not criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. (7,11,12) As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (6,9)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, Anguilla has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development, Investments, and Tourism	Through the Employment of Children (Restriction) Act, the Labor Commissioner has the authority to enforce all labor laws pertaining to child labor and may freely enter and inspect any premises in which violations of child labor laws may be occurring. The Labor Commissioner is also the head of the Department of Labor. (6)
Royal Anguilla Police Force Safeguarding Investigation Unit	Investigates child protection cases through interviews and forensic assessments. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in Anguilla (Table 5).

Table 5. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2020 – 2022
	Establish a minimum age for work of at least 15 years, and preferably up to the compulsory education age of 17.	2016 – 2022
	Establish age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work and determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022

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In 2022, Argentina made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government reported completing an additional 25 actions from the "100 Actions Against Trafficking" list outlined in its National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking. It also published the National Plan for the Regularization of Labor, which includes an allocation of funding for the labor inspectorate, and greatly increased the number of worksite inspections compared to pandemic years. Furthermore, the government published operating rules under the Mica Ortega Law that created an Observatory, an Interministerial Administrative Coordination Unit, and a Committee of Advisors to address sexual grooming and cybersafety of children. However, children in Argentina are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in illicit activities, such as the transport, sale, and distribution of drugs. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in agriculture. The government does not publish complete information about its labor law enforcement efforts and the labor inspectorate remains understaffed to adequately address child labor issues in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Argentina.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	5.3 (371,771)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	98.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's Analysis of Statistics from Encuesta de actividades de niñas, niños y adolescentes (EANNA), 2016–2017. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting [†] blueberries, cotton, garlic, grapes, olives, onions, strawberries, and tomatoes (3-7)
	Harvesting [†] yerba mate (stimulant plant) and tobacco (3,5,8,9)
	Garlic shelling and potato slicing (10)
	Fishing and sale of bait (10)
Industry	Production of textiles (10,11)
	Production of bricks (3,12,13)
	Construction, [†] activities unknown (3,14)
Services	Street begging [†] and handing out flyers or promotional materials (3,5)
	Refuse collection, recycling, and garbage scavenging [†] (3,15)
	Caregiving, [†] including caring for other children, the elderly, or infirm people (3)
	Working and cooking in food service (3)
	Domestic work, including cleaning, doing laundry, and ironing (3,16)
	Yard work, including cutting lawns and pruning trees (3)
	Selling produce in grocery stores (5)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (10,17,18)
	Forced labor in agriculture and in the production of garments, charcoal, and bricks (5,11,13,17,19,20)
	Use in illicit activities, including transporting, selling, and distributing drugs (10,18,21,22)
	Forced labor in domestic work and street vending (17,19)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.







‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Argentinian children perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including harvesting, caring for animals, fishing, and selling bait. (10) Misiones—producer of 87 percent of Argentina’s yerba mate—is one of the provinces most affected by child labor. Children as young as age 5 help their parents harvest yerba mate, sometimes carrying heavy loads. (23,24) In Salta and Jujuy provinces, children harvest tobacco. (8,25) Children from primarily the northern provinces, Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru, and other countries are also used in forced labor in numerous sectors, including garment production, agriculture, street vending, charcoal and brick production, domestic work, and in small businesses. (20,26,27) In addition, research found that children are used in illicit activities, including drug trafficking in the outskirts of Buenos Aires and Rosario where they serve as vigilantes, distributors, and producers. (10,22,28-30) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, reports indicate that girls from Argentina’s northern provinces are victimized by sex trafficking. (12,26) Furthermore, Paraguayan children are victims of sex trafficking in Argentina and reports indicate that traffickers exploit children participating in domestic youth sports clubs. (20,27)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Argentina has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Argentina’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a gap between the minimum age for work and the compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 2, 7, and 17 of the Prohibition of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Work Law; Article 9 of the Special Code on Contracting Domestic Workers; Article 25 of the Child and Adolescent Rights Protection Law; Articles 54 and 55 of the Law on Agrarian Work; Article 189 of the Employment Contract Law (31-35)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 10 of the Prohibition of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Work Law; Articles 176, 189, and 191 of the Law on Labor Contracts; Article 62 of the Law on Agrarian Work (33-35)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of Executive Decree 1117/2016 on Dangerous Work (36)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 15 of the Constitution; Articles 1 and 24–26 of the Modifications to the Prevention of and Sanction Against Trafficking in Persons and Assistance to Victims Law; Article 9 of the Child and Adolescent Rights Protection Law (31,37,38)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1, 25, and 26 of the Modifications to the Prevention of and Sanction Against Trafficking in Persons and Assistance to Victims Law; Article 9 of the Child and Adolescent Rights Protection Law (31,38)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 1 and 21–23 of the Modifications to the Prevention of and Sanction Against Trafficking in Persons and Assistance to Victims Law; Article 6 of the Crimes Against Sexual Integrity Law; Article 128 of the Penal Code (38-40)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 11 of the Possession and Trafficking of Drugs Law (41)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 8 of the Voluntary Military Service Law (42)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 19 of the Voluntary Military Service Law (42)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 10 of Law No. 26.200 (43)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Articles 16 and 29 of the National Education Law; Article 2 of the Law on Early Education (44,45)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 15 and 16 of the Child and Adolescent Rights Protection Law (31)

* Country has no conscription (46,47)

To further advance the National Program for the Prevention and Awareness of Grooming and Cyber-harassment Against Children, the government published operating rules under the Mica Ortega Law in July 2022 that created an Observatory, an Interministerial Administrative Coordination Unit, and a Committee of Advisors on the use of Information and Communications Technology. (48,49) However, as Argentina’s minimum age for work of 16 years is lower than the compulsory education age of 18 years, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (31-35)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTEySS)	Conducts labor law enforcement efforts in cooperation with labor officials and authorities at the provincial level in each province and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. (10,50) In part through its Inspection Directorate of Child Labor, the Protection of Adolescent Work, and Indicators of Labor Exploitation (DITIAEIEL), it enforces child labor laws and collaborates with the National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers (RENATRE) to enforce child labor laws in the agricultural sector. (10) Further, it operates a national hotline to receive reports of labor violations and leads the Network of Businesses Against Child Labor (<i>Red de Empresas contra el Trabajo Infantil</i>), which includes companies promoting best practices in the private sector to address child labor. Labor inspectors play a key role in enforcing laws related to child labor as part of MTEySS' broader enforcement strategy, the National Plan for the Regularization of Labor (<i>Plan Nacional de Regularización del Trabajo</i> [PNRT]). (10) As part of the plan's standard operating procedure for inspections, PNRT aims to detect and eradicate child labor and irregular adolescent work. (10)
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights	Delivers emergency legal and other assistance to survivors of labor and sex trafficking, including children. (10,51) Its regional offices provide legal and social services to human trafficking survivors in the provinces of Chaco, Chubut, La Pampa, La Rioja, Mendoza, Rio Negro, and Santa Fe. (10) In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the Institute of Public Policies for the Prevention of Grooming, the NGO Mom Online (<i>Mama en Línea</i>) and Twitter launched the initiative #HayAyuda meant to facilitate access to the hotline, Line 137, to anyone experiencing (or having knowledge of a situation of) child sexual exploitation, grooming, and/or domestic and sexual violence. (52)
Public Prosecutor's Office	Detects, investigates, and prosecutes cases of human trafficking and labor exploitation through its Special Prosecutor's Office for Human Trafficking and Exploitation (PROTEX). (10,53) Receives public reports of suspected human trafficking cases through an anonymous national hotline, Line 145. (10,53) During the reporting year, it identified 61 child trafficking victims and referred them to government services. (18) In 2022, PROTEX strengthened the capacities of criminal investigators through numerous trainings, including one on reparations and compensation to survivors of child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking under the Paraguayan legislation. (10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Argentina took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTEySS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (54)	Unknown (10,55)
Number of Labor Inspectors	357 (54)	385 (10)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (56)	Yes (56)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	8,731 (54)	122,313 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	11 (54)	18 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	11 (54)	Unknown (10)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (54)	Unknown (10)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (56)	Yes (56)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (54)	Yes (10)

MTEySS employed 385 labor inspectors and 312 labor inspection assistants while provincial governments also employ their own local labor inspectors, though the total number for the latter is unknown. (10) Nonetheless, research indicates that Argentina does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors. (57) Additionally, NGOs continue to report that the number of provincial inspectors is not adequate. (10) In 2022, MTEySS trained national and provincial inspectors from Santa Cruz, Tucuman, and Salta, including 67 inspectors on procedures to follow after a case of child labor has been identified. An additional 85 inspectors received training on verifying

administrative records for child labor and forced labor cases. (10) MTEySS also provided new tablets to its labor inspectors to use in conducting inspections. (10) MTEySS requires inspectors to refer victims of child labor to the Provincial Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor for social services assistance and its inspection protocol mandates that federal labor inspectors notify the relevant provincial child protection authorities after detecting a child labor violation. (26,58) Labor inspectors are also required to file a criminal complaint with the provincial courts of the relevant jurisdiction for any child labor violation detected. (3,26,58) MTEySS reported that its labor inspectors cooperated with law enforcement authorities in criminal matters resulting from the criminal complaints that inspectors filed after identifying child labor violations. (10,26) However, the government did not publish labor enforcement data on the total number of child labor penalties imposed or collected. (10) In addition to resources for labor inspections, the National Plan for the Regularization of Labor (*Plan Nacional de Regularización del Trabajo [PNRT]*) funding of approximately \$342,000 included a nationwide awareness raising campaign during the reporting period. (55)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Argentina took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including allocating insufficient financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Number of Investigations	16 (54)	9 (10)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	11 (54)	13 (10,55)
Number of Convictions	6 (54)	12 (10)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (54)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (54)	Yes (10)

During the reporting period, 16 defendants were prosecuted for child labor crimes in 5 cases involving 5 children. Argentine courts also convicted 12 individuals of using children for prostitution, pornography, and labor trafficking in the textile industry, imposing sentences ranging from 6 to 25 years' imprisonment; one individual received a 3-year conditional sentence and did not serve time in prison. (10) In addition, as part of international operation "Protected Childhood 9 and 10," enforcement officials detained and indicted 33 individuals for the production and distribution of child pornography. (59) Furthermore, in November 2022, a Federal Network Alert Operation in Buenos Aires and 14 provinces led to the detention of 21 individuals for suspected child pornography-related crimes. (60) In the past, Argentine law enforcement authorities have reported receiving insufficient funding and other resources to carry out their mandates. (20)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of interagency cooperation.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor (CONAETI)	Coordinates federal efforts to prevent and eradicate child labor and implements the Third National Action Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Work (2018-2022). Led by MTEySS and includes representatives from the Executive Power, industry associations, and labor unions, in addition to benefitting from the advice of the ILO and UNICEF. (61,62) During the reporting year, it began the second phase of the Federal Program for the Eradication of Child Labor and launched the 2022 Action Plan of the Network of Companies Against Child Labor. It also developed the "Childhoods Free of Child Labor" program. (10) CONAETI held four plenary meetings throughout 2022. (10) At the December 2022 meeting, it presented the 2023 National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Labor. (63) There are also 24 Provincial Committees for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor (<i>Comisiones Provinciales para la Prevencion y Erradicacion del Trabajo Infantil [COPRETI]</i>), which coordinate activities at the provincial level between government, business, unions, and civil society stakeholders. (54,64)

There continues to be a need to strengthen cooperation between national- and provincial-level governments to address child labor. (65,66)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of publicly available information on activities taken under each policy during the reporting period.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Third National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Regulation of Adolescent Work (2018–2022)†	Aims to prevent and eliminate child labor, including its worst forms, and to regulate adolescent work. (61) Promotes the dissemination of information on child labor, efforts to strengthen the labor inspectorate, civil society engagement on child labor issues, inclusive education, and institutional and legislative reform. (3,10,61,67) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period.
Federal Strengthening Program for the Eradication of Child Labor	Supports leaders at the sub-national level to improve strategies to prevent and detect child labor and irregular adolescent work. (54,68,69) Aims to coordinate efforts among COPRETI, civil society organizations, labor unions, and companies in common geographic areas and sectors that show high risks of child labor. (54) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period.
National Plan Against Human Trafficking and Exploitation, and for Protection and Assistance of Victims (TIP Action Plan 2020–2022)	Managed by the Federal Council to Fight Human Trafficking and to Protect and Assist Victims, focuses on the prevention and prosecution of human trafficking crimes and the creation of a database to track cases and the provision of services to human trafficking survivors. (70-72) In 2022, the government implemented 25 actions out of the "100 Actions Against Trafficking" listed in the plan, including by supporting the survivors' compensation assistance fund, establishing a hotline for survivors, and creating new partnerships with prosecutors' offices from nine South American countries. (10,17,48,54)

† The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (73)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Universal Child Allowance Program (<i>Asignación Universal</i>)†	Government program funded in part by the World Bank that provides a conditional cash transfer to unemployed parents and workers in the informal economy, contingent upon parents' fulfillment of health and education requirements for their children. (3,74) During the reporting period, the government increased the payment to beneficiaries by 8 percent in comparison to the prior year. (10,18,75,76)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers (RENATRE) Awareness-Raising Campaigns†	Campaigns that raise awareness of child labor in agriculture. (77) During the reporting period, RENATRE identified 36 children subjected to conditions of child labor. It also accompanied approximately 540 children through its RENATRE Center for Childcare and Rural Education (<i>Centro RENATRE de Cuidado y Educación Rural</i>) within the provinces of Tucuman, Salta, Misiones, and Jujuy. (55,78)
Good Harvest Program	Provides childcare facilities and services for migrant and rural families involved in seasonal harvests. (79,80) In 2022, the program created 104 childcare facilities to serve more than 6,600 children of rural workers. (10,81)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Argentina.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (83,84)

As a result of the coordination between the National Ministry of Public Works and the National Ministry of Social Development, 30 child development centers operated in the provinces of Chaco, Buenos Aires, San Luis, Entre Rios, Formosa, and Jujuy. (10) In May 2022, the first child development center in the country for children of yerba mate pickers opened its doors in Comandante Andresito, Misiones on land donated by the municipal government. With an initial capacity for 60 children, the center is funded by the national government and supported by relevant unions. (85,86) Under the National Campaign Against Child Labor in Brickmaking, the government also ensured that 98 percent of children from brickmaking families attended school during the reporting period. (10) However, funding for shelters and assistance to girl survivors of sex trafficking remains lacking. (58) Research also found no evidence of social programs that specifically target children engaged in street begging and performing, windshield washing, and guarding parked cars, despite the prevalence of these activities that are designated as hazardous for children.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Argentina (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 16 to 18 years to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 385 to about 1,406 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 21.1 million people.	2015 – 2022
	Publish information on the labor inspectorate budget.	2015-2022
	Enhance coordination and information-sharing with provincial governments in order to publish information on the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure law enforcement bodies have adequate funding and resources to carry out their operations.	2021 – 2022
	Strengthen the capacity of Argentina's police and judiciary to investigate and prosecute cases of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Improve government coordination, particularly between national and local government entities, in the reporting of data and the provision of services to survivors of child labor.	2017 – 2022
Government Policies	Publish information on the activities undertaken to implement the Third National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Regulation of Adolescent Work (2018-2022) and the Federal Strengthening Program for the Eradication of Child Labor.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Develop programs to address sectors in which child labor is prevalent, including street begging.	2018 – 2022
	Increase funding for shelters and assistance to girl survivors of sex trafficking.	2020 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Armenia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government enacted a new Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code, which strengthened Armenia’s child protection framework by criminalizing child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The government also adopted a universal inspection checklist on labor rights violations which is applicable to all industries. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Armenia is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because it continued to implement a regression in law that delays advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Labor inspectors lack full authority to conduct unannounced inspections, despite receiving additional authority in 2022 to carry out limited unannounced inspections when detecting unregistered employment cases. The lack of unannounced inspections may leave potential violations of child labor laws and other labor abuses undetected in workplaces. Children in Armenia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. In addition, the government does not routinely collect or maintain official data on the prevalence of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Armenia.

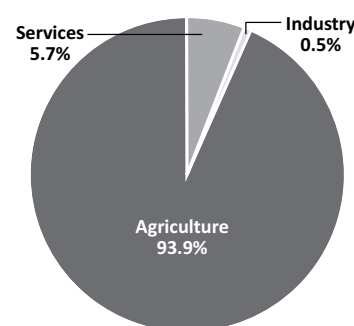
Table I. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.0 (24,602)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	8.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		91.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021 published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from National Child Labor Survey (SIMPOC), 2015. (2)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3,4)
	Raising livestock, including cattle breeding, cattle herding, and sheepherding (5,6)
	Forestry and fishing (3)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown (3,4,6,7)
Services	Vehicle maintenance (3,6)
	Selling food (6,8)
	Street work, including vending; gathering scrap metal; selling flowers, napkins, and icons; and begging (3,5,9)
	Working in shops, cafés, and supermarkets (5,6,10)

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,5,11,12) Forced begging and forced labor in stores (4,5,8,9)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

The Government of Armenia does not routinely collect or maintain official data on child labor. (9,13,14) Reports indicate that significant numbers of children, primarily boys ages 14 to 18, leave school to work in the informal sectors in agriculture and construction. (9,15,16) In 2022, according to the police, the number of children engaged in begging increased; however, the police did not find evidence of organized crime behind the begging. (9) Children of families who travel for seasonal labor and work on farms in remote rural areas are less likely to be enrolled in school and are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor in agriculture. (17) Authorities note that less-educated, socially vulnerable girls are at higher risk of being trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, while children living in economic hardship or children deinstitutionalized from orphanages are more likely to be coerced into forced begging, farm work, and forced labor in the service sector. (9,12)







Although Article 38 of the Constitution of Armenia and Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education guarantee free universal education, children from ethnic minority and low-income families continue to have reduced access to education. (18-21) Reports indicate that in some rural areas, girls' education is not prioritized due to traditional cultural norms. (15,20) The government has made progress in improving access to education in remote communities and implemented a program to pay tuition fees for students from national minorities. The detection of school dropouts has also been a priority for the government; however, there is no enforcement of the mandatory school attendance requirement, nor are there programs to identify, assess, and address the reasons for truancy or dropping out. (5,22)

The Law on Education requires all schools to be inclusive for children with disabilities by 2025; however, children with disabilities still face difficulty accessing mainstream education where school buildings remain inaccessible. (19,21) In addition, lack of accessible learning materials, special education teachers and other specialists makes it particularly difficult for students with hearing, visual, and mental disabilities to access mainstream education. (21) Challenges remain with institutionalized children, such as those living in government boarding schools, orphanages, and special education institutions, who are vulnerable to exploitation in child labor and are at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. (4,7,23)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Armenia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 15, 17, 18, and 102 of the Labor Code; Article 57 of the Constitution; Article 41.6 of the Administrative Violations Code (18,24,25)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 17.1 and 257 of the Labor Code, Article 41.6 of the Administrative Violations Code (24,25)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Decree on Approval of the List of Occupations and Work That Are Likely to be Heavy and Hazardous for Persons Under the Age of 18 Years, Pregnant Women, and Women Taking Care of a Child Under the Age of 1 Year; Articles 140, 144(3), 148, 149, 153, 155, 209, 249, and 257 of the Labor Code (24,26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 57 of the Constitution; Article 3 and 3.2 of the Labor Code; Articles 188 and 189 of the Criminal Code (18,24,27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 188, 189, and 242 of the Criminal Code (27)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 188–190, 239, and 298–300 of the Criminal Code (27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 71, 238, 393, and 394 of the Criminal Code (27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16‡	Article 29 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Law on Military Service and Status of the Military Servant; Government Decree No. 525-N of April 26, 2012 (28-30)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 19 of the Law on Military Service and the Status of the Military Servant (28)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 29 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Articles 137, 147, 238, and 320 of the Criminal Code (27,30)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Article 18 of the Law on Education (19)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 38 of the Constitution; Article 6 of the Law on Education (18,19)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (29)

During the reporting period, the government enacted a new Criminal Code and a new Criminal Procedure Code, which strengthened Armenia’s child protection framework by criminalizing child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (27,31) In addition, the government approved changes to the Labor Code that define “forced or compulsory labor,” which allows the government to fully enforce its prohibition on forced labor as prescribed in the Constitution, Criminal Code, and Labor Code. (18,24,27,32) Adopted in May 2022, amendments to the Law on Identification and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking include requirements for the government to issue a National Action Plan to counter human trafficking and to set specific minimum standards for the services provided to survivors of trafficking, to include child survivors. The amendments expand the definition of trafficking to include “exploitation of persons in helpless situations” from the previous version that referred to “exploitation of a person who, because of a mental disorder, is unable to realize or control his/her behavior.” (33,34) In October 2022, the government issued a decree on Approved Indicators for Identifying Trafficking Victims by the Identification Commission, to include specific indicators to identify potential child victims of trafficking. (35)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) finalized a draft law on Child Rights and Child Protection System to include several regulations related to the worst forms of child labor. (9,36) In addition, in 2022, MoLSA finalized a draft package of amendments to the Labor Code to include clarification and consolidated provisions related to child labor. (9) The amended Labor Code was adopted in 2023 and it includes provisions that align the minimum age for work law with the international standards. (24)

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Because the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (18,19,24,25) In addition, the Labor Code allows children ages 14 and 15 to work restricted hours with the permission of a parent or guardian but does not identify specific activities that constitute light work. (24)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/ Agency	Role & Activities
Health and Labor Inspection Body (HLIB)	Ensures compliance with legal requirements in the fields of healthcare and labor law. (5) Publishes an annual report on activities undertaken the previous year and plans for the upcoming year. (8,37) Operates a labor rights violations complaint hotline and online platform to which individuals can submit complaints. (9) Carries out on-site inspections based on a pre-determined list of companies compiled based on risk assessment methodology, an annual work plan, as well as in response to complaints, including child labor complaints, and administrative proceedings. Also authorized to issue penalties for any administrative violations they uncover and to refer cases to criminal law enforcement when appropriate. (38) During 2022, HLIB held seminars for students of the State Pedagogical University and the College of Finance and Economics of the State Economic University on reducing children's involvement in the worst forms of labor, ensuring safe working conditions in the workplace, and preventing child labor exploitation. (9) HLIB continued the internship program started in 2021 with the Agricultural University, hosting student interns majoring in occupational safety and health issues, and training them on labor issues including child labor. In 2022, the ILO organized a multi-day training for labor inspectors on legal provisions related to working conditions, employee protection, and child labor. (9) In addition, over 50 labor inspectors participated in two 2-day trainings organized by the Department of State-funded World Vision program on the application of forced labor indicators including for children. (9)
Criminal Enforcement Agencies	General Department of Criminal Police enforces laws against the worst forms of child labor and transfers information received on alleged crimes and trafficking in persons cases to the Investigative Committee. Anti-trafficking, domestic violence, and other units of the police prevent and respond to crimes, as well as support the Investigative Committee's investigator in conducting criminal proceedings and perform the investigator's assignments as needed. (9,31,39) Conducts administrative proceedings, enforces protective measures, and other activities prescribed by law. Conducts internal investigations and submits to the Investigative Committee case information about alleged crimes. (9) Every regional police unit throughout the country has a designated officer whose portfolio includes human trafficking. (40) Operates a hotline to receive complaints related to human trafficking and migration issues. (4,40,41) In 2022, the police increased their efforts in identifying children begging in the streets and, for the first time, they were able to fine parents for engaging a child in begging by applying Article 177 of the Administrative Violations Code. (9) During the reporting period, the Police continued with human trafficking-related trainings for its staff and organized 8 trainings attended by 100 participants. (42) Investigative Committee, through its Department for Investigation of Trafficking in Persons, Crimes Against the Sexual Inviolability of Minors and Illegal Drug Trafficking Crimes, initiates criminal proceedings and conducts investigations of all cases of human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (9,31,43)
Prosecutor General's Office (PGO)	Through the Department for Combating Crimes against Humans within the PGO, oversees the legality of Police operations and Investigative Committee investigations and prosecutes criminal cases involving child trafficking. Prosecutors receive regular training on human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor. (39,44)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, the lack of full authority to conduct unannounced inspections in Armenia may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2.8 million (5)	\$3.5 million (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	50 (5)	57 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (25)	Yes (25)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	544 (5)	389 (9)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (5)	7 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	1 (5)	7 (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	1 (5)	7 (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (24)	No (45)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	N/A (5)	N/A (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (9)

In March 2022, the government adopted a universal inspection checklist on labor rights violations which is applicable to all industries to verify their compliance with labor legislation requirements. (9) This checklist allowed the Health and Labor Inspection Body (HLIB) to carry out scheduled on-site labor inspections in 2022, compared to 2021 when most of HLIB's labor engagement was initiated through administrative proceedings, in part due to lack of an approved checklist. (5,9,39) Of the 398 on-site inspections conducted in 2022, 234 were on labor rights and 155 were on workers' health and safety, and primarily targeted mining, manufacturing, and construction businesses. In 2022, HLIB identified seven violations of child labor laws in construction, small and medium trade, and gas services, and children were between 17 and 18 years old. (9) All of the companies were fined and penalties were collected in total amount of \$1,500 (601,185 AMD). (9)

In 2022, HLIB had funding to employ 92 labor inspectors, of which 57 positions were filled. (9) In November 2022, the government adopted changes to the Law on Organizing and Conducting Inspections to allow HLIB to carry out unannounced inspections only when detecting unregistered employment cases. (9,45,46) Even for routine inspections, HLIB must inform employers of an upcoming inspection three business days in advance. (40) HLIB has broader authority when responding to a complaint, in which case HLIB may issue notification to the employer via e-mail and immediately conduct a site visit; however, if the business director or acting director is not present and does not receive the notification, inspectors are not allowed to start. (5,38) HLIB lacks legal mechanisms to fully enforce compliance with labor legislation, including conducting unannounced inspections and conducting inspections after working hours. (9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Armenia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient specialized training for investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	1 (47)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	1 (47)
Number of Convictions	1 (5)	1 (43)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (5)	Yes (43)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (9)

During the reporting period, one person was convicted and sentenced to 5 years of imprisonment and was conditionally released with a 2-year probation period for involving three minor victims in forced begging in 2016. (43,47) One criminal case from 2021 of involving a child in forced begging was concluded and sent to court with an indictment. (47) In addition, the police conducted a preliminary investigation on one child labor trafficking case. (9,43,47) Authorities reported an increase in the use of social media to coerce and blackmail vulnerable individuals into sex trafficking. (12)

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, 52 judges (19.2 percent of judges) and all 376 prosecutors from the Ministry of Justice attended trainings on the new Criminal Code and the new Criminal Procedure Code. (42) With support from the U.S. Department of State-funded World Vision program, multiple government agencies participated in several human trafficking-related training activities, and the State Migration Service developed guidelines for identification of potential victims of human trafficking among migrants and other at-risk populations, to include the specifics of working with potential child trafficking victims. (42,43) In addition, during the reporting period, three prosecutors, three investigators from the Investigative Committee, one investigator from the National Security Service, and three police officers participated in an online training course on Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation organized by the International Law Enforcement Academy of Budapest and supported by the U.S. Department of State. (39,42)

Reports indicate that law enforcement officials may not receive sufficient specialized training on interviewing survivors of child trafficking, which in some cases can prevent local investigators from collecting sufficient evidence to build a prosecutable case. (4,39,48) Although the Criminal Procedural Code includes provisions to protect witnesses and minimize victim re-traumatization, the government does not always employ these measures in all human trafficking cases, including those involving minors. (31,41) In addition, the change in the law enforcement structure resulting in the decrease of police involvement in initial investigations and establishing the Investigative Committee as the leading investigative agency raised further concerns among civil society about proactive identification of trafficking victims and effective investigations under the new criminal procedures. (31,43)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efforts to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interagency Working Group Against Trafficking in Persons	Operates under the Ministerial Council to Combat Human Trafficking and ensures operational coordination. Multidisciplinary group of government representatives and national and international NGOs, chaired by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA). (7) MoLSA also chairs the Trafficking Victims Identification Commission comprising representatives from MoLSA, Prosecutor's Office, Police, and two NGOs, tasked with identifying individuals as victims of trafficking and referring them for required assistance and support. (7) During the reporting period, the working group discussed findings on the implementation status of the 2020–2022 National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons and developed the 2023–2025 version of this anti-trafficking plan, which was approved by the government in early 2023. (9,43,49)

Armenia lacks coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor, including street work, the services sector, and agriculture. (16)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of policies to cover all forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2020–2022)	Supported the development of policy and the implementation of activities to address human trafficking. Committed the government to train specialists in multiple spheres, including law enforcement, the courts, educators, and medical providers. (50,51) Included a chapter on prevention of child trafficking and child exploitation. (7,52) From July 30 to December 2, 2022, the government conducted human trafficking awareness-raising campaigns, including outreach meetings and trainings, across the country. (42,43) In addition, classes on human trafficking topics continued as part of the middle and high school civics curricula. (42)

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During the reporting period, MoLSA, with UNICEF's support, developed a draft Strategy on Labor and Social Protection for 2023–2026 that covers vulnerable populations, to include children. This strategy will inform future cross-sectoral and thematic sub-strategies related to labor and social protection. (9,53) Research found no evidence of any policies to address child labor in all its forms in Armenia, including in agriculture, services, and other forms of informal work.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Family Benefits Program†	Seeks to mitigate poverty for families with children by giving families a monthly payment based on their financial situation, the number of children in the family, and the geographical location of their home. (54) During the reporting period, research was unable to determine the impact of this ongoing program.
UNICEF Country Program for 2021–2025	Improves child protection systems, including through expanding programs for children in extreme poverty, improving social integration of children with disabilities, and developing a victim witness protection system. (5,55) In 2022, continued to support the government's child protection systems through technical assistance, operationalization of policies, and strengthening systems at central and local levels to ensure more integrated delivery of services for children and families in various social sectors. (56)
Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking‡	Operates in partnership with NGOs to provide medical, psychological, social, and legal services to survivors of human trafficking, and access to education for children. Continued services were provided to survivors during the reporting year. (5,8,22,51) In 2022, the government also increased funding to the shelter to \$100,000 (40.2 million AMD), twice the amount allocated in 2020. (57)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Armenia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (54)

Although the Government of Armenia has implemented programs to address child labor, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs to assist children engaged in child labor in street work or in agriculture. In addition, personnel and resources are insufficient to meet the needs of many social services programs, and participation is low due to a lack of awareness-raising outreach by the government. (22)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Armenia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 16 to 18 to align with the compulsory education age.	2022
	Ensure that Armenian law specifies the types of light work acceptable for children ages 14 to 15.	2014 – 2022
Enforcement	Strengthen the inspection system by permitting unannounced inspections.	2017 – 2022
	Empower labor inspectors to conduct inspections and apply administrative penalties to all cases of child labor, including cases conducted after working hours and when the business director or acting director is not present.	2021 – 2022
	Protect children by providing law enforcement officials with specialized training on interviewing survivors of child trafficking.	2018 – 2022
	Implement existing witness protection mechanisms to protect survivors of child trafficking who cooperate with law enforcement.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure law enforcement officials understand their mandated duties and the Investigative Committee is adequately trained on trafficking victim identification and investigations.	2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to address all worst forms of child labor in all sectors, including in street work, services, and agriculture.	2009 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt policies to address child labor in all its forms in Armenia, including in agriculture, services, and other forms of informal work.	2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in agriculture and construction, to inform policies and programs.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that all children, including girls, children in remote areas, those from low-income families and families that travel for seasonal labor, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have equal access to education.	2010 – 2022
	Strengthen measures in the educational system to identify truant children and enforce mandatory school attendance requirements to ensure children are not engaged in child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure the availability of out-of-care services for deinstitutionalized children in parallel with increased efforts to prevent institutionalization of children and ensure that children currently residing in government institutions are not engaged in child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that mainstream education is accessible to children with special education needs and children with disabilities by improving the accessibility of the physical infrastructure and increasing the availability of special education teachers and other specialists for students with mental disabilities.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Family Benefits Program and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022
	Implement programs to address child labor in street work and in agriculture.	2009 – 2022
	Allocate sufficient personnel and resources to publicize and provide social services throughout the country, offer sufficient training to services providers, and assign reasonable caseloads.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Azerbaijan made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Internal Affairs trained more than 700 police officers from 25 city and district police units on forced labor and human trafficking issues. In addition, the government continued efforts to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream education by establishing 12 more schools with inclusive classrooms, in addition to the existing 8 schools. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Azerbaijan is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it has not rescinded a law that delays advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. This law continues a moratorium on all worksite labor inspections. While inspectors can conduct desk reviews in response to complaints, this lack of proactive or onsite inspection mechanisms may leave potential violations of child labor laws undetected in workplaces. Children in Azerbaijan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging. In addition, data are limited regarding how many children are currently engaged in child labor. In some instances, police treat children forced to beg or engage in street work as a family issue, leading to child labor cases not being properly referred for criminal investigation and prosecution.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Azerbaijan.

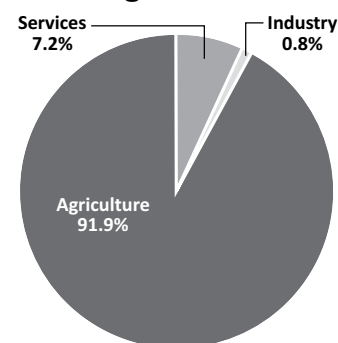
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.5 (70,034)
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	94.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from the Child Labor Survey (SIMPOC), 2005. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including harvesting potatoes and production of cotton, tea, and tobacco† (3-7)
Services	Street work, including begging, vending, carrying luggage, and gathering scrap metal (7-10) Washing and repairing cars (11,12) Catering, activities unknown (8,12,13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,8,9,14,15) Forced begging (9,15-17)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Child labor in Azerbaijan occurs in the agriculture sector; however, data are limited regarding how many children are currently engaged in child labor in this or other sectors. (2,3,5,6,18) Although the prevalence of child labor in cotton harvesting appears to be small, there were reports in 2019 and 2020 that children under age 15 worked picking cotton and other crops to augment family incomes; however, no new reports were identified in 2021 or 2022. (3,15,19,20) Reports also indicate that children under age 17 engage in household work, on small family farms, or in family businesses. (17,21) Crop production in Azerbaijan is governed by a "priority" system that conditions agricultural subsidies, services, and access to public resources, such as irrigation water, on whether farmers produce one or more crops that the government has designated as high priority. (3) In some cases, regional and local government officials are held responsible for mobilizing sufficient labor to meet established production targets for one or more of these priority crops. (22,23) This system creates a risk that farmers and local officials may turn to exploitative labor practices, including child labor and forced labor, to ensure they are able to meet production targets for designated crops. (19,23) Street children, some of whom become homeless after they are released from government-run care institutions, and children from marginalized communities are also particularly vulnerable to human trafficking within Azerbaijan. (7,24,25)

Although Article 5 of the Education Law guarantees free universal education, undocumented children and children with disabilities face difficulty accessing education. (15) The court proceedings required to secure identification documents can take up to 2 or more years, during which time children without identification documents are ineligible to enroll and attend school or to access health services. (3,15,26) Some children with disabilities are not in school or are facing barriers to education caused by inaccessible infrastructure, lack of specialized training for teachers on inclusive education, and discrimination against individuals with disabilities. (17,27,28) Children from the Roma ethnic community also face barriers to education due to social stigma. (7,26) In addition, children in some rural areas have low rates of school attendance. (15,17,27) Children not attending school are vulnerable to child labor.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Azerbaijan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Azerbaijan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of criminal prohibitions for purchasing sex with a child.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 42 and 249 of the Labor Code; Article 192 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (29,30)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 250 of the Labor Code; Article 192 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (29,30)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 98, 250–252, and 254 of the Labor Code; Decree 58 of the Cabinet of Ministers in 2000; Article 9 of the Law on the Rights of the Child (29,31,32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 35 of the Constitution; Article 144-2 of the Criminal Code (33,34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		The Law on Trafficking in Persons; Article 144-1 of the Criminal Code (34,35)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 144-1 and 171 of the Criminal Code (34)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 28 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 170 of the Criminal Code (32,34)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	19	Article 36 of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service (36)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 2, 3, and 12 of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service (36)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 116 of the Criminal Code (34)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 19 of the Law on Education; Article 13 of the Law on General Education (37,38)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 5 and 19 of the Law on Education; Article 13 of the Law on General Education; Article 22 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 42 of the Constitution (32,33,37,38)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (37,38)

The laws criminalizing commercial sexual exploitation of children are insufficient because they do not criminalize the purchase of commercial sex involving children. Similarly, the criminalization of involvement of a child in "immoral actions" does not clearly criminalize the use or offering of a child for the production of pornography or pornographic performances. (34)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in Azerbaijan may impede the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population (MLSPP)	Enforces labor laws related to the worst forms of child labor through the State Labor Inspection Service (SLIS). (17) All SLIS inspectors are trained to detect and respond to child labor and received training on child labor issues in 2022. (17) Due to the ongoing moratorium on all worksite labor inspections, passed in 2016, SLIS is only able to receive and respond to complaints through desk reviews. (27,39,40) Based on information received, inspectors are empowered to identify violations and impose appropriate penalties. Although SLIS can impose penalties directly against individuals, it must refer cases to the courts to levy penalties against corporate entities. (17,39) In addition, SLIS is able to identify potential minimum age violations by monitoring an electronic database of labor contracts, and has the authority to impose penalties for violations. (39,41) During the reporting period, SLIS drafted and submitted for the government's approval a risk-based routine inspection plan. Approval of this plan will permit SLIS to resume limited routine labor inspections for occupational safety and health issues, including hazardous child labor, based on pre-identified risk groups of enterprises. (17,21)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA)	Central executive agency responsible for public security and the prevention of criminal offenses, including child trafficking and begging. (16,17) Through the Anti-Trafficking Division (ATD), enforces human trafficking laws, investigates human trafficking violations, to include child trafficking, and enforces criminal laws related to the use of children in illicit activities. (9,17) Refers children who are survivors of human trafficking to social services for assistance with school enrollment, participation in recreational activities, and procurement of proper documentation. (8,17) Operates a 24-hour hotline for the public to report suspected child trafficking and instances of child begging. (15) ATD serves as the National Coordinator of the Interagency Commission to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, coordinates policies to counter trafficking in persons, and oversees implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. (3,42) Continued to preside over the work of the 33 entities, including government agencies and local executive authorities, involved in implementing the 2020–2024 National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. (17) During the reporting period, MoIA trained more than 700 police officers from 25 city and district police bodies on trafficking prevention and prevention of forced labor. (17,43)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in Azerbaijan may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown (17)
Number of Labor Inspectors	180 (15)	182 (17)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (29,30)	Yes (29,30)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown	Yes (17)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	0 (15)	0 (17)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (15)	0‡ (17)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	1 (15)	0‡ (17)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	1 (15)	0‡ (17)
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (15)	No (17)
Routine Inspections Targeted	N/A	N/A
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (44)	No (17)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	N/A	N/A
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (15)	Yes (17)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (17)

‡ Data are from January 2022 to November 2022.

The government suspended all routine and unannounced labor inspections in 2016 as part of a broader anti-corruption drive. In 2017, this moratorium was extended until 2021 as part of an effort to stimulate small- and medium-business growth. (8,11,21,39,40) In early 2022, the government extended this moratorium through January 1, 2023. (45,46) The moratorium was then extended through the end of 2023. (43) In addition, there have been no indicators as to when the government anticipates a resumption of onsite inspections. (17,44,47) Although the State Labor Inspection Service (SLIS) is still able to receive and respond to complaints related to child labor and impose penalties in cases of violations, this response cannot include onsite inspections, and inspectors are limited to conducting desk reviews. (17,27,39,40) From January to November 2022, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population (MLSP) reported there were no cases of underage labor, forced child labor, or administrative offenses committed by employers related to the involvement of children in activities that could endanger their life or health. (17)

Research indicates that Azerbaijan does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (48) Government officials also assess the number of inspectors as insufficient to fully enforce child labor laws in Azerbaijan. (49) In addition, sources report a lack of coordination between law enforcement agencies. (15)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Azerbaijan took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of investigations pertaining to forced begging cases.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (15)	Yes (17)
Number of Investigations	0 (15)	16 (17)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (15)	14 (17)
Number of Convictions	1 (15)	1 (17)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (15)	Yes (17)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (17)

In 2022, the government significantly increased its criminal law enforcement efforts. (41) From January to November 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) identified six cases of child trafficking. (17,43) MoIA reported that one criminal case was initiated in November 2022 for involving a child in prostitution and in child pornography. Four additional criminal cases were initiated for child trafficking, resulting in three prosecutions. (17) In addition, MoIA investigated 15 cases involving a child in criminal activity, a significant increase over previous years; however, it is unclear if any of those cases involved children in drug production, drug trade, or other forced labor. Of those cases, 13 ended in an indictment and 2 investigations are ongoing. (17) In 2022, the government sentenced one individual to 7 years and 6 months in prison in a child forced labor case. (17)

In 2022, the government increased its provision of training to address human trafficking. Employees of 139 migration offices of the State Migration Service received training on human trafficking, victim identification indicators, and children's rights issues. (43) Multiple government agencies and NGOs also participated in several anti-human trafficking-related trainings organized by IOM, with financial support from the U.S. Department of State and USAID. In addition, the MoIA and the Ministry of Education held educational seminars at 36 secondary schools to raise awareness of human trafficking. (43) Furthermore, the government distributed 7,000 educational booklets and 7,000 flyers on human trafficking to state agencies and offices, and a human trafficking awareness-raising video, produced by the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs (SCFWCA), aired on social media and public television. (43)

In 2022, reports indicate that law enforcement and other government agencies used human trafficking indicators when detecting potential victims of human trafficking among vulnerable populations, including children. (43) In some cases, police treat children begging or engaging in street work as a family issue rather than screening for indicators of forced begging. As a result, these situations are often referred to the Commission on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights for coordination of services, rather than to law enforcement agencies for investigation and, when warranted, criminal prosecution of forced begging cases. (8,25,50-52) In addition, research found that police declined to investigate potential forced begging cases and that children identified in child labor resumed work almost immediately after being identified by law enforcement officials. (3,9,49) Also, child labor law enforcement efforts are concentrated in Baku, with few investigations undertaken outside the capital. (53)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Commission on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights	Coordinates policies at the national level to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. Located within the Cabinet of Ministers and acts as a national-level version of district-level Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights, which are located in individual district Executive Commissions. (3) Although Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights exist at both the national and local levels, research was unable to determine the relationship between these respective national and local coordinating bodies. (3)

In 2022, the government amended the Rules of the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking to modify the Interagency Commission's composition and include NGO members, and to delegate the Commission with implementation of the National Referral Mechanism. (43,54,55) The SCFWCA also continued to regulate, implement, and coordinate child-related policies, including research on child labor. Although the SCFWCA is empowered to work with local governments, particularly district-level Executive Committees, to coordinate policy and research related to children and gather data on the situation of children and families in rural areas, the body has limited capacity to carry out its work. (3,17) In 2022, the SCFWCA conducted trainings on the prevention of child labor for labor inspectors, police inspectors, regional authorities, and business owners. (17)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including lack of coverage for all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2020–2024)	Aims to address human trafficking through enhanced coordination between relevant government agencies and improved protection for human trafficking victims. Includes action items to improve services for child trafficking victims, address forced child begging, and research and monitor forced labor and child trafficking risks. (56) Amendment to the law On Combating Human Trafficking in 2022 approved the establishment of a working group under the authority of MoA's Trafficking in Persons National Coordinator to oversee the implementation of the National Action Plan. (17,35,57) In October 2022, the government also participated in an IOM- and USAID-led mid-term review meeting on the implementation of the National Action Plan. (43)
Strategy on Children of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2020–2030)	Aims to improve child protection mechanisms and legislation. Through the associated National Action Plan, includes action items on implementing international commitments under ILO Convention 182 and enhancing coordination to detect and prevent child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. (58,59) The National Early Childhood Development program was launched as part of the Strategy. Jointly organized by SCFWCA, the EU delegation to Azerbaijan, the Regional Development Public Union, and UNICEF Azerbaijan, the program aims, in part, to increase the capacity of children's services professionals and raise awareness around the health and education of children in four target regions—Ganja, Shirvan, Aghjabadi, and Absheron. (60)
State Program for the Development of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities (2018–2024)	Aims to create inclusive education for children with disabilities. In addition to the existing 8 schools nationwide, in 2022, the government established 12 more schools with inclusive classrooms, including training teachers in inclusive teaching methods. (51,62,63) The government continued to develop and publish textbooks for students with intellectual disabilities and methodical aids for teachers and parents during the reporting period. (51)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (15,21)

Although the government amended the labor code in 2020 to prohibit children under the age of 18 from engaging in work involving difficult or harmful working conditions, the law does not specifically mention agriculture and research found no policy on hazardous child labor, including in agriculture. (15)

The State Program on Improvement of Official Statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2018–2025) aims to improve and further develop the national statistics system, and includes an action item on developing a methodology for studying child labor and conducting survey research on the prevalence of child labor in Azerbaijan. (61) In 2022, the State Statistical Committee and UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Conducting a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in Azerbaijan, including a dataset on child labor. (64,65)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including insufficient funding.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Government-run Assistance Centers†	Social Shelter and Rehabilitation Center for Minors‡, MLSPP-run shelter in Baku for vulnerable children, including street children. (3,50) Children are able to stay in these shelters until they turn 18. (16) The shelters were active in 2022. (41) Additionally, Victims Assistance Centers† provide direct social services and social services referrals, education on administrative and legal procedures, and medical assistance to survivors of human trafficking, including children. Funded by MLSPP. (17,39) In 2022, each of the six child trafficking victims identified by MoLA were paid a one-time benefit from the government, and five of them were placed in Victims Assistance Centers and received additional services from these centers. (43)
Targeted Social Assistance Program†	MLSPP-run program that provides cash transfers to vulnerable families. (8) During the reporting period, the government approved an increase in benefit payments for families receiving state assistance, including families with children with disabilities and low-income families. (17,51,66)
MoLA Identification Document Program†	Provides identification documents to undocumented minors who may be street children or victims of human trafficking. (49) In 2022, three identified child trafficking victims were provided with identity cards. (43)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Azerbaijan.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (14,21,50,67)

In 2022, the Ministry of Education organized training on children's labor rights to 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students. (17) However, the level of government support for NGO-run shelters for trafficking victims is inconsistent. (14) Directors of these shelters note that the unpredictable nature of funding prevents long-term planning and capacity building of shelters, including those that serve child victims. In addition, the number of social workers with training in supporting vulnerable and at-risk children remains low. (14,42,68)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Azerbaijan (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Criminally prohibit the use of children for prostitution and the use and offering of children for the production of pornography and pornographic performances.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Resume routine, targeted, and unannounced labor inspections, including in response to complaints, to ensure that child labor laws are enforced.	2016 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 182 to 265 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 5.3 million people.	2016 – 2022
	Publish information on the labor inspectorate's operations, including funding levels.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that children identified by law enforcement as engaged in child labor are referred to social services centers or other services, as appropriate, so that they do not return to child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Increase law enforcement investigations related to child labor outside Baku.	2018 – 2022
	Screen for forced labor indicators in child begging situations, including those referred by NGOs, and, as appropriate, investigate and prosecute forcing children to beg as a criminal offense.	2018 – 2022
Coordination	Increase the coordination and referral of potential child labor crimes between the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population and the Ministry of Interior Affairs.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that all regulative and coordinating bodies, including the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs and the national and local Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights, have the capacity to carry out their intended mandates, including across different agencies and levels of government.	2016 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as hazardous work in agriculture.	2016 – 2022
	Revise policies on priority crops that mandate production targets to help prevent child labor in agriculture.	2019 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that children from marginalized groups and children with disabilities have equal access to education.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that undocumented children are able to access education.	2019 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken to implement social programs to address child labor during the reporting period.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the government provides sufficient and consistent funding to NGO-run shelters for victims of human trafficking to enable shelters to provide adequate services to victims.	2015 – 2022

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In 2022, Bangladesh made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments rescued 3,990 children from working in various hazardous sectors. Furthermore, the government added five additional sectors to the hazardous work list (dried fish production; informal steel-based work; brick and stone production, collection, and carrying; tailoring and informal production of garments; and waste management), officially prohibiting children from working in these jobs. The Bangladesh government also launched its first national study on human trafficking. The study will help provide a baseline understanding of the human trafficking situation in the country, including how human trafficking crimes are committed and how victims are targeted. The government supported UNICEF's rollout of the Myanmar Curriculum to over 250,000 Rohingya children in 2022, providing Rohingya students with a formal, standardized education based on Burma's national curriculum. However, despite these initiatives to address child labor, Bangladesh is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continues to hinder educational opportunities for Rohingya children in 2022. Reports indicate that the Bangladesh government closed Rohingya-operated schools and threatened to confiscate UNHCR-issued identity cards from Rohingya teachers and move them to the flood-prone island of Bhasan Char, which hampered education access for Rohingya children. Furthermore, children in Bangladesh are still subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in the drying of fish and the production of bricks. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the production of garments and leather goods. The Bangladesh Labor Act does not apply to children working in all sectors in which child labor occurs. Though the government did not publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts related to child labor in 2022, penalties for child labor violations can only be imposed after a lengthy legal process and, when courts do impose them, the fines are too low to deter child labor law violations.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Bangladesh. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, with support from the ILO, started collecting data for their national child labor survey in 2022. The survey results have not yet been published. (1-3)

Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	9.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	88.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	8.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019. (5)

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Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting and processing crops, including tobacco† and salt;† raising poultry; grazing cattle; and harvesting tea leaves (6,7)
	Fishing, including drying and processing fish,† including shrimp† (3-8)
Industry	Producing garments, including tailoring and in the informal garment sector,† and textiles, including jute (3,10,11)
	Producing leather† and leather goods,† including footwear (3,12,13)
	Manufacturing bricks,† glass,† hand-rolled cigarettes (<i>bidis</i>),† matches,† soap,† furniture (steel),† furniture (wood),† aluminum products,† and metal products† (3,8,14-16)
	Shipbreaking† (3,17,18)
	Battery recycling† (3,19)
Services	Construction† and breaking bricks† and stones† (3,8,17)
	Domestic work (3,20)
	Garbage collecting, sorting, and recycling† (3,11,21)
	Working in transportation, including ticket taking,† welding,† pulling rickshaws, driving, working as crew members on fishing boats, and repairing automobiles† (6,8,20,21)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Working in retail shops (3,8,22,23)
	Use in illicit activities, including smuggling and selling drugs (3)
	Forced begging (3)
	Forced labor in the drying of fish and the production of bricks (1,3,24)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,25,26)
	Forced domestic work (3)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Approximately 1.7 million children in Bangladesh, many under the age of 11, are engaged in child labor. Approximately 3.45 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 are working in Bangladesh, of which 1.28 million are engaged in hazardous work. (3,27) Hazardous sectors include tanneries, shipbreaking, the dried fish industry, and rolling cigarettes. (1,3,12) In addition, 93 percent of child labor in Bangladesh occurs in the informal sector, including domestic work, street work, and work on small agricultural farms. (6,9,28) There are more than 400,000 children engaged in domestic work in Bangladesh. Some girls are forced into domestic work and are abused by their employers. (3,4,29) Further, children throughout Bangladesh are sexually exploited, including with the hazardous use of steroids for girls to appear older, in the country's legal and illegal brothels, and child commercial sexual exploitation remained widespread during the reporting period. (3,9,30) Reports indicate that some police officers accept bribes to verify that workers in registered brothels are older than age 18 and to procure falsified documents for younger workers. (9,26) Some reports suggest that children are being hired at the local district level for jobs funded by the government's job creation projects. (3)

A The government supported UNICEF's rollout of the Myanmar Curriculum to over 250,000 Rohingya children in 2022, providing Rohingya students with a formal, standardized education based on Burma's national curriculum. (86) However, during the reporting period, the Government of Bangladesh closed most Rohingya-operated schools and continued to ban Rohingya children from attending schools outside of refugee camps. (31-35) It also prohibits teaching Rohingya children the Bangla language or the national curriculum as part of the government's policy to prevent Rohingya refugees from integrating and permanently residing in the country. (32,33,36-39) Furthermore, during the reporting period, the government threatened to confiscate UNHCR-issued identity cards from Rohingya teachers and students and to move them to the flood-prone island of Bhasan Char. (32-40) Finally, there are reports of Bangladeshi officials taking bribes to provide human traffickers access to refugee camps and facilitate the trafficking of Rohingya children. (3) NGOs allege that some officials allow traffickers to operate at the India-Bangladesh border and check-points. (3,9)

More than 40 percent of schools lack basic sanitation facilities and basic hygiene services, and one in five schools lack safe drinking water. (41) Many schools in Bangladesh are overcrowded and over 80 percent run double




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shifts. (3) The country does not have an adequate number of teachers for an education system of its size. (3) The Primary Teacher Training Institutes cannot keep up with the demand for teachers, particularly in rural areas. (3) Other barriers to education include the high costs for transportation, uniforms, and school supplies. (3,6,42) In 2022, almost 20 million children were vulnerable to extreme weather, floods, river erosion, and sea-level rise. (43,44) Increases in such climate-related natural disasters that result in damage to property and crops push large sections of the population into poverty, making children more vulnerable to exploitative child labor and human trafficking. (3,43,44)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Bangladesh has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Bangladesh’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of protections against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	19	Sections 1–2, 34 and 284 of the Bangladesh Labor Act; Sections 159, 161, and 175 of the Bangladesh EPZ Labor Act, 2019. (28,45)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 39–42 of the Bangladesh Labor Act (28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Sections 39–42 of the Bangladesh Labor Act; Statutory Regulatory Order Number 65, List of Worst Form of Work for Children (28,46,47)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 370, 371, and 374 of the Penal Code; Sections 2, 3, 6, and 9 of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (48,49)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 2,3, and 6 of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act; Sections 2 and 6 of the Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children Act (49,50)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 372 and 373 of the Penal Code; Sections 78 and 80 of the Children’s Act; Sections 2,3, 6 and 11 of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act; Sections 2 and 8 of the Pornography Control Act (48,49,51,52)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Section 79 of the Children’s Act (51)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16+	Army, Air Force, and Navy Regulations titles unknown (53-56)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009. (57)
Compulsory Education Age	No		Sections 2 and 3 of the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act (58)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 17 of the Constitution (59)

* Country has no conscription (60)

During the reporting period, the Bangladesh government revised the list of hazardous work to include five additional sectors: dried fish manufacturing; street-based child labor such as hawking and trash collection; production, collection, and transportation of bricks and collection and transportation of stones; local tailoring and informal garment sectors; and garbage and waste management. (3,47) However, even with the hazardous work list amendment, the list does not cover domestic work, in which children are known to work long hours and are exposed to violence and sexual assault.(3,15,46,61-63)

The Bangladesh Labor Act does not meet international standards because a number of sectors are excluded from its application, including seamen, ocean-going vessels, agriculture farms with fewer than 10 workers, and domestic work. (28) Bangladesh does not criminalize the use, procurement, or offering of children in pornographic performances. Bangladesh does not criminalize the use of children who are not under guardianship in prostitution. (48,52) Bangladesh criminalizes the use of children in the transport of drugs, but does not criminalize the use of children in the production of drugs. (51) The Bangladesh Constitution also does not criminally prohibit the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups. (59) No compulsory education age is in effect because the compulsory education age of 10 in the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act does not go into effect until it is published in the Gazette. In addition, as the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act only provides compulsory education for children up to age 10, even if it is put into effect, children between the ages of 10 to 18 would remain particularly vulnerable to child labor as they do not have to be in school and they are not able to legally work without restriction. (16,64)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE)	Located within the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE). (64) Enforces labor laws, including those related to child labor and hazardous work. (65) During the reporting period, carried out monthly awareness programs in factories and at district offices on the elimination of child labor among enterprises, employers, and the public. (3) Also removed 3,990 children from automobile, brick, and stone crushing; engineering workshops; bakeries, hotels and restaurants; and the plastics sector. (3)
Bangladesh Police	Enforce Penal Code provisions protecting children from forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (66) Through its Trafficking in Persons Monitoring Cell, investigate cases of human trafficking and enforce the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act's anti-human trafficking provisions. (67) Operate victim support centers for trafficked women and children through partnership with 11 NGOs. (68)
Bangladesh Labor Court	Prosecutes labor law violations, including those related to child labor, and imposes fines or sanctions against employers. (28)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of unannounced inspections in the export processing zones.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4,233,631† (69)	\$4,937,352‡ (69)
Number of Labor Inspectors	305† (70)	400‡ (70)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (68)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	45,832† (70)	43,042‡ (69)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	7,025† (70)	5,193 (3,69)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	135 (70)	26 (66)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	6 (70)	11 (69)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (68)	Yes (71)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (68)	Yes (71)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (72)	Yes (66,72)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (68)	Yes (71)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (6)	No (3)

†Data from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

‡Data are from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023.

Bangladesh employs 400 labor inspectors for a workforce of over 74 million workers. (66,73) The ILO and NGOs report that the number of labor inspectors in Bangladesh is inadequate and that the number of inspections carried out is insufficient given the size and population of the country. (73,74) The shortage in human resources and high turnover rates at DIFE led the agency to omit around 95 percent of industrial and commercial establishments from its inspection list. (3) Sources also indicate that DIFE is insufficiently funded and that inspectors are reluctant to enforce labor laws for fear of pushing people out of work and into poverty. (3)

Under the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) Labor Rules, published in October 2022, DIFE is required to provide notice to the Bangladesh EPZ Authority (BEPZA) by “intimation” prior to conducting inspections. (75) Following the inspection, DIFE must submit its report to the BEPZA Inspector General to implement recommendations the BEPZA Inspector General deems feasible. DIFE cannot file cases in the labor courts for violations in the EPZ. (75) Rather, the BEPZA Inspector General must file all cases in the EPZ Labor Court. During the reporting period, DIFE and BEPZA jointly developed standard operating procedures for inspecting EPZ factories. (3,75) For factories outside of the EPZs, DIFE must notify the establishment three times regarding a labor law violation before it can lodge a complaint in the labor courts. (3,75) Penalties for a child labor law violation carry a maximum fine of approximately \$47 (5,000 taka), which is insufficient to act as a deterrent. (3,18,28,45) In addition, while a previous reciprocal referral mechanism existed between labor authorities and social services, DIFE lacks an active referral and rehabilitation system for children. (3,6)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the lack of publicly released criminal law enforcement information.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (6)	Yes (66)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (66)

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According to independent reports, during the reporting period, the Government of Bangladesh repatriated 21 survivors of human trafficking, including children. (9) But the Government of Bangladesh did not provide specific information on criminal law enforcement efforts against child labor crimes. Some reports have suggested that investigation coordination between agencies and authorities is lacking. (3) Many cases are resolved through mediation and settlement rather than prosecution. (3,6) According to reports, criminal investigators do not receive sufficient training on forced labor and child labor. (6) Despite the high number of children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, the Government of Bangladesh largely ignores the issue due to the prevailing belief that commercial sexual exploitation is not a major issue in the country. (3) DIFE has the authority to refer cases only to the labor courts and not the criminal courts, even in cases requiring criminal court intervention. The labor courts have never referred a case to the criminal courts. (3) Corruption and the lack of enforcement of Occupational Health and Safety Codes contribute to industrial fires and fire-related worker deaths, including child laborers. (10,70,76)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including coordination efforts that encompasses all child labor issues.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Child Labor Welfare Council	Coordinates government efforts to guide and monitor the implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Elimination of Child Labor. (77) Chaired by MOLE and comprising of officials representing relevant government ministries, international organizations, child advocacy groups, and employer and worker organizations. (77) In 2022, the Council held Child Labor Monitoring Committee meetings at the district level and organized discussions with various stakeholders on the elimination of child labor. (78) MOLE integrated the workflow of different divisional councils with that of different NGOs, district, and sub-district level committees to better coordinate efforts to address child labor. While the councils held regular meetings in 2022, reports suggest that coordination efforts at the district level are limited to child marriage, and do not encompass all child labor issues in Bangladesh. (3)

The Counter-Trafficking National Coordination Committee under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) formed counter-trafficking committees at the central government and grassroots levels to improve coordination. (78)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including not covering all aspects of child labor in the country.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan of Action on the Elimination of Child Labor (2021–2025)	Identifies strategies for developing institutional capacity, increasing access to education and health services, raising social awareness, strengthening law enforcement, and creating prevention and reintegration programs. (79) Although there has been some improvement, the National Plan of Action on the Elimination of Child Labor faces coordination and implementation challenges among ministries. (3,6,80) During the reporting period, MOLE activated the National Monitoring Core Committee prescribed under the National Plan of Action. The committee formulates national-level policies to eliminate child labor with assistance from NGOs. (3)
National Plan of Action for Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking (2018–2025)	Establishes a plan to build government capacity to address trafficking in persons and provide economic and social safety nets for victims and vulnerable populations, particularly children. (81,82) Led by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA). The national plan has been extended to 2025 due to the slow progress made during 2020 and 2021 pandemic lockdowns. (11) In 2022, MOHA routinely monitored and implemented the action plan through a government organized NGO coordination committee. (83) MOHA also conducted consultative meetings with domestic and international organizations to collect feedback on the ongoing implementation process. (2) During the reporting period, the government established special tribunals, created an anti-trafficking task force to curb human trafficking, and took initiatives to prevent child trafficking, mostly for child labor in the informal sector. (78)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (84)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the discontinuation of a social program that could cause an increase in child labor.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Elimination of Hazardous Child Labor, Phase IV (2021–2023)†	Government of Bangladesh-funded, \$33 million, 3-year project implemented by MOLE. (70) Removed 90,000 children from hazardous labor in Phases I through III by providing informal and technical education, stipends, and awareness raising for employers and families. (21) Phase IV of the Elimination of Hazardous Child Labor program was approved in October 2021. (6,16) MOLE has signed agreements with 112 selected NGOs to remove 100,000 children from hazardous work. (70) Under the program, NGOs will provide education and vocational training to affected child laborers. During the education period, each child's family will receive a monthly stipend of \$9 (1,000 taka). After completing the training, each child will receive \$93 (10,000 taka) as financial compensation. (3) During the reporting period, NGOs completed a nationwide child labor survey to identify the child labor situation in 43 hazardous sectors. (3) However, the government did not make the survey public. (70)
School Programs‡	Second Chance Education is funded by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and provides informal schooling for children ages 8 to 14 who have dropped out of formal schools. (2) Along with the Educating a Child Initiative, the program supported 170,000 students from 2018 to 2022. (78) The School Feeding Program, which ended in July 2022, helped implement school meal programs in poverty-stricken areas for 12 years. Reports have noted that the decision to end the program could fuel school dropouts and increase child labor since many families keep their children in school due to feeding programs. (3)
Child Protection Programs†	Child protection programs in Bangladesh include Child Sensitive Social Protection in Bangladesh (CSPB) II which will end in 2024. (66,70) The CSPB Project is implemented by the Ministry of Social Welfare's Department of Social Services, with support from UNICEF, to implement the Children Act (2013). This program will help to reduce violence, abuse and neglect against children. (16,66) The project offers case management services to identify vulnerable children and provide intervention plans, psychological counseling through the Child Friendly Services hub, and conditional cash support to reduce child labor. (70) During the reporting period, CSPB supported underprivileged families to reduce child labor, prevent early marriages, and reduce school dropouts. (70) The project offers a 24-hour emergency hotline service through Child Helpline 1098. (2) Between July 2017 and June 2022, the helpline received more than 1.4 million complaints, stopped 2,754 child marriages, and served 31,980 callers with psychosocial counseling, 18,753 callers with legal assistance, and 8,572 callers with protection from violence and abuse. (66)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Bangladesh.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (80)

Research has found that the government's social programs often align 16357 with the priorities of various domestic and foreign funders and lack coordination among relevant ministries to address the cross-cutting nature of child labor issues, such as its intersections with economic insecurity and education. (22) In addition, DIFE maintains the 16357 Hotline to receive complaints involving labor law violations. During the reporting period, the 16357 Hotline received 612 complaints; however, the complaints were not related to child labor. (3) The Department of Social Services manages the child protection 1098 Helpline. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs maintained a mobile app called "Joy," which records dialogue and images of child labor victims and perpetrators and sends relevant information to the National Helpline Center 109 and nearby police stations. (2) During the reporting period, around 300 people received emergency support through the "Joy" app. (66)

In 2022, Bangladesh launched its first national study on human trafficking. The study will help provide a baseline for the trafficking situation and examine how human trafficking crimes are committed and victims targeted in Bangladesh. (85)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Bangladesh (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those engaged in domestic work, and working on vessels and small farms.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive, including domestic service.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child for pornographic performances and prostitution.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of children for both the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the compulsory education age meets minimum age for work.	2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors reduce the number of times an inspector has to notify the employer of violations before assessing penalties for labor violations.	2014 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 380 to 1861 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 74.5 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that inspections for child labor are conducted in export processing zones.	2013 – 2022
	Increase the penalties for child labor violations, ensuring they are sufficiently stringent to deter future violations.	2022
	Ensure that criminal child labor violations are prosecuted.	2022
	Ensure that investigation and prosecution of child sexual exploitation is carried out and inspectors and investigators receive proper training to address child labor crimes, including commercial sexual exploitation.	2022
	Ensure that the referral mechanism between law authorities and service providers is adequate, including implementing a functional coordinating mechanism between the two.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that public officials who facilitate or participate in the worst forms of child labor are held accountable, including officials who facilitate the trafficking of Rohingya children.	2019 – 2022
	Collect and publish national-level data on the enforcement of criminal laws relevant to child labor, including information on the training for investigators, and the number of prosecutions initiated, convictions attained, and penalties imposed.	2012 – 2022
	Provide law enforcement with trainings and sufficient financial resources to conduct investigations, including those related to the worst forms of child labor, and address the high turnover of labor inspectors.	2014 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the relevant ministries mandated to address child labor issues in the country implement a coordinating mechanism that is effective and takes into account the cross-cutting nature of child labor issues, such as economic insecurities and education.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the district-level coordination efforts under the National Plan of Action on the Elimination of Child Labor encompass all child labor issues in Bangladesh, rather than being limited to child marriage.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that the committee implementing national level policy to eliminate child labor effectively coordinates work across different ministries.	2022
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to make education accessible for all children by removing barriers to school attendance, including increasing capacity of the Teacher Training Institute, improving bathroom sanitation and resources, ensuring a well-developed distance learning mechanism, increasing the number of schools to minimize overcrowding and double shifts, and eliminating high costs for transportation and school materials.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the local district authorities, responsible for implementing the central government's job creation project, enforce strict anti- child labor policies and penalize those who hire children for government-funded job programs.	2022
	Expand education services for Rohingya refugee children by removing barriers to attending school, allowing instruction in Bangla, expanding the small pilot program to include children of all ages, ceasing the seizure of identification documents, and implementing programs to decrease children's engagement in child labor activities	2017 – 2022
	Expand programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, including developing and implementing programs to address child labor in the informal garment, leather, and fish drying industries.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure continuation of school feeding programs and other social safety net programs to provide children with school meals.	2022

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In 2022, Belize made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government approved the National Child Labor Policy and Strategy 2022–2025, which aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2025 and prioritizes addressing legislative and information gaps, increasing child labor law compliance, and reducing barriers to education. The Ministry of Human Development also introduced new standard operating procedures on human trafficking and trained 85 percent of social workers, 80 percent of labor officers, and 78 percent of immigration officers on using the procedures to refer victims to care. However, children in Belize are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in agriculture and construction. Belize does not meet the international standard for prohibitions of hazardous work because children over age 14 are permitted to work in dangerous activities like mining and construction. In addition, Belize has not adequately prohibited the use of children in illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Belize.

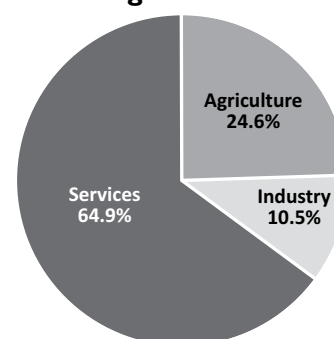
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	1.6 (1,405)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	1.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		106.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from National Child Activity Survey (SIMPOC), 2013. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including sowing, weeding, harvesting, and clearing for beans, bananas, citrus fruits, cereals, corn, rice, sugarcane, papayas, onions, and vegetables; fumigating with herbicides and insecticides; and operating machinery, including tractors and vehicles (3-5)
	Butchering and raising livestock, including poultry and cattle (5,6)
	Fishing, including for fish, lobster, and conch (3,5)
Industry	Construction, including carrying heavy loads, carpentry, masonry, wood carving, work in sawmills, and using power tools (3,5,7)
	Quarrying, including operating machinery (8)
	Building and repairing fishing vessels (3)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street, wholesale, and retail vending (3,7)
	Yard work, including using lawnmowers, weed-eaters, and machetes (5,6)
	Domestic work, including cleaning (3)
	Food service, including cooking, using large mixers, and grilling (3,5,9)
	Working in the tourist sector, including in food and alcohol service and hospitality, and as tour guides, maintenance personnel, and security guards (8,9)
	Working in auto repair, including as workshop mechanics and repairing tires (3,5,6)
	Welding (3,6)
	Transportation, including work as bus attendants, collecting fares, carrying heavy loads, and pumping gas (3,5,6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,10,11)
	Forced labor in food service (9)
	Use in illicit activities, including trafficking of drugs and weapons (3,9,12)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Government officials state that there are anecdotal reports of Belize being a destination for child sexual exploitation, with reports of children being trafficked in areas frequented by tourists, such as Belize City and San Pedro. (8,13) Law enforcement reported that the commercial sexual exploitation of children involving female minors does occur in bars, informal brothels, unregistered hotels, and guest houses. (3) Migrant children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, with most typically originating from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. (3,7) Sources also report the prevalence of "sugar daddy" arrangements, in which a wealthy male offers to pay school fees, provide cash payments, or purchase groceries or gifts for a family in exchange for sexual favors from a young, usually female, family member. (11) A limited number of sources also indicate that male child trafficking victims from Belize City were forced to transport and distribute drugs and ammunition and commit murders as part of gang warfare. (3,7,12) The contraband trade, in which children work as smugglers, vendors, and informants, has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted due to a reduced number of enforcement officers manning border entry points. (3) Furthermore, some families remove their children from school on their fifteenth birthday so they can work in the service industry or smuggle contraband near the Mexican and Guatemalan borders, where smuggling is known to be a high-profit enterprise. (3,7)







Belize lacks a recent comprehensive child labor study, which makes it difficult to clearly determine the sectors and activities in which working children are engaged. (5,8) Children below the age of 12 informally work in the agriculture, fishing, wholesale and retail, service, and tourism industries. In urban areas, children as young as 10 years old work with their families or independently as street vendors. (3) Mennonite children, undocumented migrant children, and children from Belizean families who perform seasonal jobs often perform hazardous tasks on Mennonite land, including operating machinery and fumigating with chemicals. (3,9) In the fishing industry, young boys from coastal communities dive for aquatic species and to free snagged nets. (3) Some of these children cannot swim or may be involved in swimming at extreme depths. (8) Boys in construction industries are exposed to heavy equipment and tools, work with electricity without any formal training or supervision, carry heavy loads, and work at dangerous heights without harnesses. Children working as store clerks in the Corozal Commercial Free Zone at the border with Mexico carry heavy loads to unload containers and have extended work hours during peak season. (3)

In Belize, primary and secondary education is tuition free up to age 14, and in-person learning at all education levels resumed in August of 2022. In areas lacking a school, the state provides free transportation for children to attend the nearest primary school. (3,7) Truancy officers reported that in some schools in northern Belize, up to half of primary school students are absent from school to pick beans and other crops during the harvest season. (3,14) Belize lacks an adequate number of qualified teachers, basic supplies, and adequate facilities, and many children's access to education is hindered by the cost of school fees, textbooks, uniforms, and meals. (3,7,8,14)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Belize has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Belize's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of prohibitions related to the use of children in the production and trafficking of drugs.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Articles 54, 164, 169, and 172 of the Labor Act; Articles 2 and 3 of the Shops Act (15,16)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	14	Articles 2 and 7 of the Families and Children Act; Articles 54 and 169 of the Labor Act (15,17)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 8 of the Constitution; Articles 157 and 158 of the Labor Act; Articles 2 and 11 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act (15,18,19)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 11–14 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act; Article 9 of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act; Articles 49–51 of the Criminal Code (19-21)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 2, 11, 13, and 14 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act; Articles 2–9 of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act; Articles 49–51 of the Criminal Code (19-21)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 16 of the Defense Act (22)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14	Articles 2 and 59 of the Education and Training Act; Articles 2 and 34 of the Education Act (23,24)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 70 of the Education and Training Act; Article 45 of the Education Act (23,24)

* Country has no conscription (22)

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The government is reviewing the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act to consider merging them into one piece of legislation and held consultations with stakeholders in 2022. (11) In July, the government also announced that it will increase the compulsory education age from 14 years to 16 years by 2025. (3,25)

While Belizean law sets the minimum legal age for work in wholesale and retail trade or business at age 14, the law is inconsistent with international standards on light work because the types of light work permissible for children ages 12 to 14 have not yet been identified. (15,16) Belizean law is also inconsistent with international standards on hazardous work as children over age 14 may work in industrial undertakings—including activities such as mining, manufacturing, and construction. (15) In addition, although Belizean law indicates that children under age 18 are prohibited from being employed or engaged in any activity that may be detrimental to their health, education, or mental, physical, or moral development, the law does not specify which employment activities are detrimental to children. (15,17) A list of hazardous work prohibited for all children has not been adopted as law. (26) The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act and the Criminal Code prohibit all forms of child sexual exploitation, with the former explicitly prohibiting child pornography. (20,21) However, consensual sex with children ages 16 or 17 is permitted, including in cases in which a person gives or promises remuneration, goods, food, or other benefits in exchange for the sexual act. This provision leaves children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including child sex trafficking. (3,20) Belizean law does not contain a prohibition on the use of children in specific illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs. (21,27)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labor, and Local Government	Enforces child labor laws through its Department of Labor. (3,7,9) Coordinates with other agencies on child labor reporting, monitoring, and enforcement activities. (25) In 2022, the Department of Labor conducted child labor awareness trainings for various stakeholders across the country on the new National Child Labor Policy and Strategy 2022–2025, including stakeholders in the agriculture sector. (3,28) The department also provided educational sessions on child labor to approximately 1,000 high school students in the northern districts, the epicenter of sugarcane cultivation, and a similar session was provided to employers and employees in the service and agriculture sectors. (3)
Department of Human Services, Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous People's Affairs	Enforces criminal laws regarding forced child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and use of children in illicit activities. (3,7) Has a case management system, FAMCare, which is used in all cases. (11,25) In 2022, partnering with the Human Trafficking Institute, the Ministry of Human Development introduced new standard operating procedures, the Trafficking in Persons Identification Guidelines and Referral Standard Operating Procedures for Frontline Officials in Belize. During the reporting period, trained 85 percent of social workers, 80 percent of labor officers, and 78 percent of immigration officers on using the procedures to refer victims to care. (11)
Belize Police Department (BPD)	Investigates cases of child labor, commercial sexual exploitation, and human trafficking through Sexual Offense and Family Violence Units. (7-9) Through its Anti-Trafficking in Persons (A-TIP) Unit, uses specialized screening to identify potential survivors of trafficking and forced labor. The A-TIP Unit also works closely with its counterparts in the A-TIP Council, which is the interagency governmental council overseeing cases involving human trafficking and forced labor. (3,7) Works with the Department of Labor to carry out investigations into child labor, compile evidence, and submits cases to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution for prosecution. (3)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Belize took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient funding for the labor inspectorate.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (7)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	24 (7)	24 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (15)	Yes (15)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (7)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	584 (7)	831 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (7)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (7)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (7)	0 (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (7)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (15)	Yes (15)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (7)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (3)

In 2022, with the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in April, labor officers were able to freely travel in both urban and remote areas to conduct inspections. The labor inspectorate conducted country-wide inspections in industries most at risk for child labor, except in mining, quarrying, and household activities. (3) There were 57 child labor inspections conducted at suspected worksites in the tourism, agriculture, street vending, retail, and construction sectors, and inspections were carried out in English, Spanish, and Kriol. The Department of Labor is required to visit every business at least once a year, but it usually falls short of this goal due to a lack of resources. (3)

Although the government does not publish information regarding labor inspectorate funding and reports that resources are sufficient to carry out inspections, sources indicate that funding for the labor inspectorate is insufficient to conduct accurate inspections throughout the country and to address child labor. (3) The training budget for 2022 was approximately \$43,650. Reporting indicates that not all offices possess the necessary transportation and personnel to operate effectively, affecting the quantity and quality of inspections, especially in rural areas. (3,7) Reports also indicate that it is difficult to follow up on the status of complaints made about suspected child labor cases. (3,9,29)

The labor inspectorate is authorized to issue warnings or citations for labor law violations, but the court must assess penalties for those citations, which may range from a fine to a prison sentence. The legal penalty for employing a child is only a fine of \$12.50 or imprisonment of 2 months. (3) Liquor licensing boards, which also have a responsibility to detect and report cases of child labor, routinely fail to conduct required inspections of restaurants and bars. (11,29,30) Thus, inspections and penalties may be insufficient to deter child labor violations including child trafficking. Belize has a system for referring children found during inspections to appropriate social services. (3,25)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Belize took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of human resources.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (7)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (7)	3 (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (7)	0 (3)
Number of Convictions	2 (31)	0 (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (7)	No (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (3)

In March, the Belize Police Department and Immigration Department identified 20 minors on board a bus bound for an orange orchard in the Stann Creek district as potential victims of child labor. Upon further investigation, two of the minors were confirmed to be accompanying their parents and not victims of exploitation. (3) The Anti-Trafficking in Persons (A-TIP) Unit and the Department of Human Services (DHS) carried out subsequent investigations concerning the remaining 18 minors and discovered they were unaccompanied minors, some traveling without necessary documentation, who intended to work in agriculture. (3) Additionally, during the reporting period, the A-TIP Unit removed four female children from situations of suspected trafficking. The four children were provided protection and care by the DHS. (3) The Government of Belize also investigated two cases involving both sex and forced labor of children during the reporting period. (3, 11) The two cases involved two girls as victims, one Belizean and one Guatemalan national, and the investigations are ongoing. Three cases involving sex trafficking of children brought into Belize, two from Guatemala, and one from Honduras, are also ongoing. (3) Furthermore, reporting indicates that there are bureaucratic inefficiencies with the justice system and a lack of personnel, including judges. (11) According to the A-TIP Council, no cases of child sex tourism were registered, but officers continued to do screening for this crime at the airport. Moreover, Belizean authorities conducted multiple raids and unannounced inspections at worksites suspected of child labor violations, as part of a multinational police operation. (11, 14)

In 2022, 540 police officers received training about trafficking in persons and child labor laws. Investigators continue to report they have sufficient office facilities but lack adequate transportation and fuel to carry out investigations. (3) There are anecdotal but consistent reports of low-level officials tolerating and participating in human trafficking-related offenses. (11, 13, 14, 32, 33)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Child Labor Committee	Coordinates efforts among ministries to prevent and eliminate child labor and implement the National Child Labor Policy. Led by the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labor, and Local Government and 14 government and civil society members. (3, 33) Held five meetings in 2022 to review and approve the third draft of the National Child Labor Policy and Strategy 2022–2025. Includes the Child Labor Secretariat and Inspectorate, which identifies, coordinates, and reports on all child labor activities. (3) In 2022, Child Labor Secretariat and Inspectorate held several working sessions, including signing an MOU with sugarcane industry stakeholders for the elimination of child labor by 2025, and a meeting for stakeholders in the sugar, banana, and citrus industries about child labor. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of legal implementation of a new national child labor policy.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Labor Policy and Strategy (2022–2025)†	Harmonizes and standardizes the definition of a child across all laws and establishes interagency coordination and information sharing. The policy was created in consultation with stakeholders and developed and funded by ILO, UNICEF, and the Government of Belize. (3) Has a policy goal of reducing the incidence of child labor in Belize and taking significant steps to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2025. Prioritizes addressing legislative and information gaps, increasing child labor law compliance, reducing barriers to education, and preventing child labor by ensuring adequate support. (25) Includes feedback from 25 entities on the effectiveness of existing policies on child labor and potential improvements. Quarterly meetings on the status of policy implementation will be organized under the National Child Labor Committee with detailed output and outcome-based reports to be issued at the end of each meeting. (25) Recommends raising both the minimum age for work and the compulsory school age to 16. In January, a national validation workshop for feedback on the new policy was held and the final version was published in July, but the report largely relies on child labor survey data from 2013, limiting its insights. (25) While the policy contains a detailed list of hazardous work activities and conditions and a light work list, they are not legally enforceable. Stakeholders also identified gaps in legislation. (25)
CARE Model	Coordinates the protection, care, and monitoring of sexually exploited and trafficked children. Outlines the role of the Department of Human Services and BPD in receiving allegations of commercial sexual exploitation of children and referring children to services. (3,8) Began in 2020 and was active during the reporting period. (14)
Amnesty Program‡	Offers a path to regularization for qualifying undocumented migrants, including children. From August to the end of December, the Immigration Department received 10,962 Amnesty Program applications, which could help prevent child labor in this population. (3,14)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (34,35)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government participated in a program that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in this social program, including adequacy of the program to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
National Resources Center for Inclusive Education†	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, Technology and E-Governance program that funds and coordinates school feeding programs in under-resourced communities. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Belize.

In 2022, the government participated in a multi-country program, Angel Watch, that helps notify immigration officers of the arrival of suspect individuals and registered sex-offenders. In addition, the government continued to sponsor billboards at the international airport and at border crossing points specifically to address child sex tourism. (11,36) Research found no evidence of government programs to prevent or eliminate commercial sexual exploitation of children, or to assist children working in agriculture, fisheries, or construction. (3,9)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Belize (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken.	2021 – 2022
	Adopt a list of hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children and ensure that all children under age 18 are prohibited from engaging in hazardous work.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law prohibits all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children ages 16 and 17.	2013 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws prohibit the use of children in specific illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish complete information on enforcement efforts to address child labor, including labor inspectorate funding.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that law enforcement agencies have sufficient resources, including vehicles, fuel, and inspectors to conduct labor inspections and criminal investigations, including in rural areas.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the level of inspections, including liquor license inspections, and penalties are sufficient to deter child labor law violations.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that inspections are conducted in all sectors most at risk for child labor, including mining, quarrying, and household activities.	2022
	Prosecute and impose criminal penalties for the worst forms of child labor, including for government officials.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that courts have sufficient personnel, including judges, to hear and try human trafficking cases in a timely manner.	2022
	Improve transparency regarding the status of complaints that are being investigated.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Conduct a comprehensive study of children's activities to determine whether they are engaged in or at risk for involvement in the worst forms of child labor, to inform policies and programs.	2018 – 2022
	Increase access to education by eliminating fees; improving educational facilities; hiring additional qualified teachers; and providing textbooks, uniforms, and meals.	2011 – 2022
	Implement programs to address commercial sexual exploitation of children and programs to assist children working in agriculture, fisheries, and construction.	2019 – 2022

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In 2022, Benin made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Benin provided criminal law enforcement data on investigations and prosecutions concerning the worst forms of child labor for publication in this report. The government also renewed and contributed funding to the Integrated National School Feeding Program, which provides meals at 75 percent of Benin's schools. Finally, labor inspectors, social workers, and judicial police officers received training from the Directorate General of Labor on standard operating procedures for child labor cases. However, children in Benin are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in the production of cotton and crushed granite. Children also perform dangerous tasks in domestic work and street vending. There are many barriers to education, especially for children with disabilities. In addition, inadequate funding for the labor inspectorate may impede government efforts to protect children from the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Benin. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	24.7 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	67.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	16.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		73.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2017–2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/ Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of cotton, including exposure to pesticides† (3,4)
	Capturing,† cleaning, and descaling fish (4,5)
	Raising livestock† (4,5)
Industry	Washing† and sieving† in gold mining and lifting heaving objects, and collecting,† crushing,† and sieving stones† for gravel and granite quarrying (4,6-9)
	Construction, including working at elevated heights, carrying materials, breaking rocks, and welding (4)
Services	Domestic work† (4,7,10)
	Working in the transportation industry† (4)
	Street work, including vending and begging (4,10-12)
	Dressmaking† and carpentry† (5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Working in restaurants and bars (4)
	Forced labor in granite quarrying, domestic work, vending, handicraft activities, and agriculture, including in the production of cotton (3,4,6-8,10-15)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking; selling smuggled gasoline on roadsides; and illegally selling alcohol, cigarettes, and pharmaceutical products on the street (4)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/ Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging (4,15) Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and use in the production of pornography (4,7,13,15-17)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




Child trafficking occurs mostly within Benin, but it also occurs to other countries, primarily Gabon, Togo, Nigeria, Niger, and the Republic of the Congo, for purposes of domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, and work in vending, agriculture, and mining. (4,7,15,18-21) Within Benin, child trafficking primarily occurs for forced labor. (4,15) Children living in the northern regions of Benin are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking to urban regions in southern Benin. (15,17) Reports also indicate that children living in the lakeside areas of southeastern Benin, including the commune of So Ava, are sometimes subjected to debt bondage. (4,15,17) Children work below the minimum age in the production of cotton, Benin's top export crop, and they are sometimes exposed to dangerous pesticides. (3,4,18) Furthermore, children are subjected to hazardous labor, and at times forced labor, in granite quarrying. (6) Children working at quarries break stones, dig sand and gravel, work at elevated heights, use construction equipment, and are exposed to dust. (4) Traditionally, under a practice known locally as *vidomègon*, children live with relatives or family friends and perform household services in exchange for educational opportunities. A majority of these children are girls, and many are subjected to labor exploitation and sexual abuse. (4,7,10,15,19,22)

In Benin, primary education is free and compulsory for all children between ages 6 and 11, and secondary education is free for girls through grade nine. (23) While boys and girls attend primary school at roughly the same rates, boys complete secondary school at a higher rate than girls. (23,24) Evidence suggests that incidences of abuse in school, including corporal punishment (outlawed in 2015), sexual harassment, and sexual abuse by teachers in exchange for better grades, continue to hamper educational access, especially for girls. (4,13,16,18) Inadequate toilets and sanitation facilities, as well as lack of access to menstruation education and products, are further barriers to girls’ education. (4,20) In Benin, other barriers to education include the need to travel long distances, insufficient numbers of teachers, and inadequate access for students with disabilities. (18,25) To address the latter, the government runs 20 specialty schools in the country, but access is limited in rural areas. (4,18) In rural areas, sometimes children do not have birth certificates due to the costs and parents’ limited understanding of birth registration procedures. Children without documentation may be denied access to education, leaving them more vulnerable to child labor. (16,18,23)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Benin has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Benin's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of free public basic education guaranteed by law.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Articles 166 and 301 of the Labor Code; Article 210 of the Child Code (26,27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 210 and 353 of the Child Code; Article 1 of the Hazardous Occupations List (27,28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations List (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 3 and 303 of the Labor Code; Articles 212 and 353 of the Child Code; Article 4 of the Law Relating to the Transportation and Trafficking of Minors (26,27,29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2–4, 6, 15, 16, 18, and 21–25 of the Law Relating to the Transportation and Trafficking of Minors; Articles 201, 212, 352, and 353 of the Child Code; Articles 499–501 and 504 of the Penal Code (27,29,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 3 of the Law on the Prevention and Repression of Violence Against Women; Article 4 of the Law Relating to the Transportation and Trafficking of Minors; Articles 212 and 378 of the Child Code; Article 504 of the Penal Code (27,29-31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 212 and 353 of the Child Code; Article 4 of the Law Relating to the Transportation and Trafficking of Minors (27,29)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 6 of Law 2005-43 (32)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 6 of Law 2005-43; Title II, Article 32 of the Constitution (32,33)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 2 and 4 of the Law Relating to the Transportation and Trafficking of Minors (29)
Compulsory Education Age	No	11‡	Article 24 of Act N° 2003-17; Article 113 of the Child Code (27,34)
Free Public Education	No		Article 13 of the Constitution; Article 114 of the Child Code; Article 24 of Act N° 2003-17 (27,33,34)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (23,34)

Children in Benin are required to attend primary school, which lasts 6 years and typically ends at age 11. This standard makes children ages 11 through 14 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. (26,27,34) In addition, while the law provides free primary education to all children, basic education through the lower secondary level is not guaranteed by law, which may increase the risk of children's vulnerability to child labor. (27,33,34)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Civil Service (MOLCS)	Enforces child labor laws and investigates labor code infractions. (18) Coordinates the National Executive Committee to Combat Child Labor (<i>Comité Directeur National de Lutte Contre le Travail des Enfants</i>). (4)
Ministry of the Interior and Public Security	Enforces criminal laws related to the protection of minors, including the worst forms of child labor and child trafficking, through the Central Office for the Protection of Minors, Families, and the Prevention of Human Trafficking (OCPM). (4,13,15,17) Maintains a child trafficking database—Benin's Children (<i>Enfants du Benin</i>)—to track and process child trafficking cases. (19) Coordinates with MOLCS to inspect labor code infractions related to child labor, and coordinates with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance to provide assistance to survivors of labor exploitation. (4) Through OCPM's vice squad (<i>Brigade des Moeurs</i>), addresses child trafficking for sexual exploitation. (4,15)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Benin took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Civil Service (MOLCS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including restrictions on inspections in agriculture.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$189,000 (18)	\$108,000 (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	35 (35)	72 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (18)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	1,015 (20)	953 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	620 (20)	104 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (18)	27 (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (18)	0 (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (18)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (18)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (18)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (18)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Yes (4)

In 2022, the government increased the overall funding for the Ministry of Labor's Directorate of Labor to \$264,000, of which \$108,000 was reserved for the labor inspectorate. Of Benin's 72 labor inspectors, 29 are dedicated to conducting child labor inspections. (4) Labor inspectors, social workers, and judicial police officers received training from the General Directorate of Labor on standard operating procedures for child labor cases. The labor inspectorate targeted inspections in several sectors in which children work, including open-air markets, workshops, mines, quarries, and construction worksites. (4) MOLCS claims that it is not permitted to conduct labor inspections in agriculture due to the lack of an interministerial decree from the Ministry of Agriculture. The labor code, by contrast, allows labor inspectors to freely enter any workplace to carry out investigations, and it requires all civil authorities to collaborate with labor officials to facilitate inspections. (9,18,26,35) This gap between law and practice means that no inspections are carried out in agriculture, a sector in which child labor is known to be present. (9,18,35) In addition, no labor inspections occurred in several other sectors where children are known to work, including fishing, domestic work, and gold mining. (4)

Labor inspections are conducted via committee and require the presence of labor inspectors, police officers, and social workers. In practice, research suggests that these requirements create logistical challenges to the labor inspection process. (18) In prior years, the labor inspectorate lacked sufficient transportation to conduct regular inspections, but in 2022, the government provided some motorcycles for department-level labor inspectors to complete their work. (4) MOLCS estimated that its budget allocation still meets less than 10 percent of its needs. (4) Research also indicates that Benin does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry

out their mandated duties. (4,36,37) In addition to child labor violations found through the labor inspectorate, the Ministry of Social Affairs reported identifying 575 violations of child labor laws and 517 cases of child trafficking. (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Benin took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (18)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (18)	108 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (18)	49 (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (18)	38 (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (18)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Yes (4)

In 2022, for the first time in several years, Benin provided for publication criminal law enforcement data on cases related to the worst forms of child labor. (4) The government has a mechanism to enable criminal authorities and social services to reciprocally refer children found in the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking, and social workers regularly refer cases. (4,15) The government also runs a child assistance hotline, which takes anonymous tips and is staffed 24 hours a day by French and local language speakers. Tips involving child trafficking and child labor are referred to social services and criminal authorities. (4,13,17) In 2022, the hotline received 44 calls related to child trafficking, and these calls were referred to police and/or social workers. (15) The government also held three training classes in 2022 for police officers, brigadiers, and commissions on child protection. (15) In addition, criminal law enforcement officers received initial training on child labor and child trafficking as part of the National Police Academy's curriculum, but the government and UNICEF have assessed the training as insufficient. (4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coordination among agencies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Executive Committee to Combat Child Labor (<i>Comité Directeur National de Lutte contre le Travail des Enfants</i>)	Coordinates efforts to address child labor. Falls under the jurisdiction of MOLCS and includes delegates from UNICEF, trade unions, local NGOs, and other government ministries. (4,13,18) Continued to implement the National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor during the reporting period. (4)

In addition to the National Executive Committee to Combat Child Labor, the National Monitoring and Coordination Working Group for Child Protection and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Technical Commission also have mandates to coordinate government-wide efforts to address child trafficking. (4,15,17) Research found that there is a lack of effective coordination among agencies responsible for addressing the needs of vulnerable children, partially due to a lack of clarity regarding institutional mandates and gaps in communication regarding child labor data. (4,18)

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V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including insufficient incorporation of child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Sector Plan.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2019–2023)	Aims to reduce the worst forms of child labor in Benin by 70 percent by the end of 2023. Targets six focus areas: (1) strengthening the legislative and institutional framework related to child labor; (2) information, awareness, and social mobilization; (3) education and training; (4) victim monitoring, protection, and referral; (5) inspection and suppression; and (6) institutional mechanisms, and monitoring and evaluation of the plan. (13,38) Includes a vocational education program focused on formalizing and regulating apprenticeships for children. (20) The government continued to implement this policy during the reporting period. (4)
Cooperative Agreement to Combat Cross-Border Trafficking	Outlines a tripartite cooperative agreement among the Governments of Benin, Burkina Faso, and Togo committing to cooperate and assist each other in the investigation of human trafficking offenses, including child trafficking. (22) In December 2022, Benin cooperated with the Governments of Burkina Faso and Togo, as well as that of Côte d'Ivoire, on a joint operation that resulted in the arrest of 15 suspected traffickers and the release and reintegration of 90 child trafficking survivors. (15)
National Action Plan to Fight Trafficking in Persons (2020–2024)	Aims to eradicate trafficking in persons, including child trafficking, by strengthening governmental systems and institutional frameworks. (17,39) The government indicates that inadequate resources were dedicated to the National Action Plan to Fight Trafficking in Persons. (15,17) During the reporting period, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Technical Commission coordinated data collection on trafficking across various government ministries and agencies, and began planning a Trafficking in Persons National Information System. (15)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Government-Funded Shelters and Retraining Centers†	Shelters and centers that provide social services to survivors of child labor and child trafficking. Includes an OCPM-operated interim care facility for children rescued from child trafficking or labor exploitation, which has capacity for 160 children and provides housing, medical, legal, and psychological services. (4,15,17,18,40) In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance operates Social Promotion Centers which provide social services to child trafficking survivors in all of Benin's 77 communes. There is also a MOLCS-run vocational school program that, with the assistance of UNICEF, provides training in trades to survivors of child trafficking. (4,15,17,18,40) During the reporting year, OCPM's interim care facility and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance's Social Promotion Centers continued to provide services to child survivors in cooperation with labor and criminal law enforcement. (4)
Integrated National School Feeding Program (2022–2026)†	\$31.7 million program funded by the Government of Benin and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. Implemented by WFP and Catholic Relief Services. (4,41) Covers 75 percent of schools in Benin and aims to improve school retention and reduce hunger. In 2022, the program was renewed and the Government of Benin contributed funding. (4,41)
Administrative Census for Population Identification†	Program to identify and register citizens lacking identity documents; collect personal data on Beninese citizens, including newborns; and issue national biometric identification cards that can be used for civil and administrative purposes. (4) The program continued to register citizens, including children, in 2022. (4)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Benin.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4,18)

Although the Government of Benin has implemented programs to protect children from human trafficking, research was unable to determine whether the government has implemented programs to assist children engaged in other worst forms of child labor, including in domestic work, mining and quarrying, and agriculture. (18)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Benin (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Establish by law free basic public education, including lower secondary education.	2021 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for compulsory education from age 11 to age 14 so it is consistent with the minimum age for admission to work.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Provide adequate training for labor inspectors and criminal law enforcement officials.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives adequate funding, including for transportation, to carry out its mandate.	2009 – 2022
	Improve coordination between the labor inspectorate, social workers, and police officers in the planning and execution of labor inspections.	2021 – 2022
	Allow the labor inspectorate to freely conduct inspections in the agriculture sector.	2021 – 2022
	Expand labor inspections in sectors with a high prevalence of child labor, including mining and quarrying, fishing, and domestic work.	2019 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 72 to 120 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 4.8 million people.	2015 – 2022
	Publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts, including penalties imposed.	2009 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure effective coordination among agencies, including by clarifying institutional mandates and improving communication regarding the collection and sharing of data.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Dedicate adequate resources to support the implementation of all policies related to child labor and child trafficking, including the National Action Plan to Fight Trafficking in Persons.	2010 – 2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education by ensuring the safety of children, especially girls, in schools, providing access to sanitation facilities and feminine hygiene products, ensuring accommodations in schools for children with disabilities, providing reliable transportation to schools, improving school infrastructure, and increasing birth registration rates.	2010 – 2022
	Institute programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including in domestic work, agriculture, mining and quarrying; and monitor and report annually on the progress of these programs.	2010 – 2022

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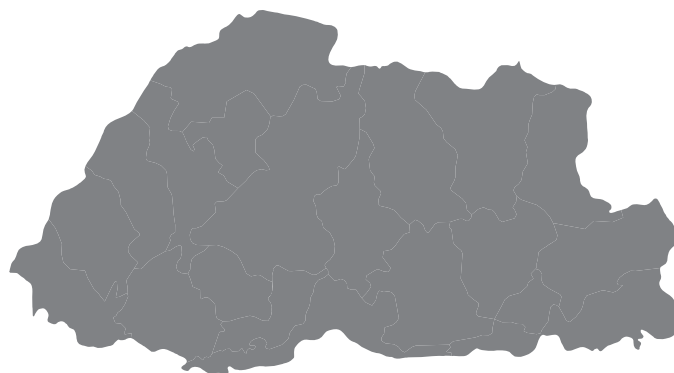
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In 2022, Bhutan made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Royal Government of Bhutan ratified the Palermo Protocol and the United Nations Protocol Against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. Additionally, it conducted anti-trafficking training programs for 72 judges and carried out 7 awareness programs on countering human trafficking for over 2,600 students. However, children in Bhutan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced domestic work. Bhutan's minimum age for work of 13 does not meet international standards and education is not compulsory. In addition, the government has not adopted a national policy to address child labor, including its worst forms, and the government did not publicly release information on its labor or criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Bhutan.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.8 (6,338)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	84.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	3.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		89.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 4), 2010. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3)
Industry	Construction, [†] activities unknown (4,5)
Services	Domestic work (3,6)
	Work in hospitality services, including restaurants (3,6,7)
	Work in automobile workshops (6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, as a result of human trafficking (6)
	Forced domestic work, including forced caregiving (3,6)

[†] Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

There is a lack of current data on child labor in Bhutan; to date, no national survey on child labor has been conducted. Bhutanese girls are victims of sex and labor trafficking, including for forced domestic work and caregiving. (6) Some are also trafficked into debt bondage and face threats of physical abuse. (6,8) Media outlets have reported instances of child labor, including some indications of forced child labor, in Bhutan's restaurants and automobile workshops. In addition, some Indian children are trafficked into Bhutan for the purpose of domestic servitude. (6,8)

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The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) provides free education to all children in Bhutan until grade 10. (9,10) While the RGOB committed to achieving universal student attendance in its 12th Five-Year Plan (2018–2023), research was unable to determine whether that objective has been implemented. (9,11) Children living in remote villages, from nomadic communities or migrant populations, and those with disabilities face significant difficulties in accessing public schools due to lack of transportation. (7,9-12) Although they have access to primary education, a small number of children who are stateless also lack access to the documentation necessary to enroll in higher education, making them more vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking. (3,7,13)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Bhutan has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3). Bhutan is not a member of the ILO.

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	N/A
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

During the reporting period, the RGOB ratified the Palermo Protocol; the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime; and the UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. (9,14)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Bhutan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including setting the minimum age for work at 13 years old.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	13	Sections 170 and 171 of the Labor and Employment Act; Regulation on Working Conditions 2012: Acceptable Forms of Child Labor (15,16)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 170 and 171 of the Labor and Employment Act (15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 9(e) of the Labor and Employment Act; Section 9 of the Regulation on Working Conditions 2012: Acceptable Forms of Child Labor (15,16)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Amendment 9 of Penal Code (Amendment) Act of Bhutan 2021; Section 11 of Acceptable Forms of Child Labor 2009; Sections 6–8, 9(a), and 10 of the Labor and Employment Act; Sections 154 and 155 of the Penal Code; Preamble and Sections 221 and 224 of the Child Care and Protection Act (15-19)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Section 9(a) of the Labor and Employment Act; Sections 221 and 224 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Amendment 9 of Penal Code (Amendment) Act of Bhutan 2021; Sections 154, 379, and 380 of the Penal Code (15,18-20)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 9(b) of the Labor and Employment Act; Sections 222–224 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Sections 225 and 375–380 of the Penal Code (15,17,18)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 9(c) of the Labor and Employment Act; Sections 216 and 220 of the Child Care and Protection Act (15,17-19)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Defense Service Rules and Regulations (20)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 9(a) of the Labor and Employment Act (15)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 9.16 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (21)

* Country has no conscription (20)

Bhutan's minimum age for work is not compliant with international standards because the Labor and Employment Act allows children age 13 to enter the labor force. (15) Although Bhutan provides free education through grade 10, attendance is not compulsory, which may increase the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (7,9,10,22) Laws prohibiting forced labor are also not sufficient as they do not criminalize slavery. (16,17) In addition, while the Bhutanese Parliament passed the Penal Code (Amendment) Act of Bhutan 2021, which amended the legal definition of human trafficking to make the legislation consistent with international standards for adults, it still includes the necessity of force, fraud, or coercion in child trafficking cases. (3,19,23,24) Moreover, although the RGOB reports that the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into Bhutan's military is age 18, the relevant Defense Service Rules and Regulations were not available for public review. (20,24)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Human Resources (MOLHR)	Investigates child labor complaints and ensures that employers comply with child labor laws. Refers cases involving the worst forms of child labor to the police. (3,22) Regularly inspects companies for compliance with the Labor and Employment Act. Regulations on working conditions cover issues related to child labor, hours of work, and penalties. (25)
Royal Bhutan Police	Investigates and enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Includes 3 dedicated Women and Child Protection Units and 10 Women and Child Protection Desks tasked with enforcing laws protecting women and children. (3,26) Refers survivors of child abuse and exploitation to child welfare officers and the National Commission for Women and Children. (3,18)
Child Justice Court	Adjudicates criminal and civil cases involving child labor. (3,18)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Bhutan took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources (MOLHR) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$180,360† (22)	Unknown (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	23† (22)	23 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (15)	Yes (15)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (22)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	998† (22)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (22)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (22)	N/A (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (22)	N/A (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (22)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (22)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (15)	Yes (15)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (22)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (22)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (22)	Yes (9)

† Data from July 2020–June 2021.

MOLHR officials acknowledged that limited financial and human resources place constraints on how many inspectors can be employed and on the number of inspections that can be conducted. (27) Reports noted that adequate training and refresher courses for inspectors were not provided due to budget issues. (7,22) Furthermore, labor inspectors are not allowed to carry out inspections on private farms or in homes. In some cases, exceptions are made if underage child labor is suspected. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Bhutan took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of data on criminal law enforcement efforts.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (22)	Unknown (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (22)	Unknown (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (22)	Unknown (9)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (22)	Unknown (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (22)	Unknown (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (22)	Unknown (9)

The Government of Bhutan did not respond to requests for information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. However, during the reporting period the government, in partnership with the UNODC and the Bhutan National Legal Institute, facilitated a training program with introductory courses on human trafficking for 72 judges. (9) The UNODC also provided a separate training for 25 police officers. (9)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Labor Task Force	Coordinates government efforts on child labor across multiple government agencies and ministries. Led by MOLHR, and comprises representatives from government, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. Research was unable to determine whether the Child Labor Task Force was active during the reporting period.

Bhutan government’s National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) coordinates the implementation of laws and policies that promote and protect the rights of women and children. (28) During the reporting period, NCWC launched a multi-sectoral campaign to end violence against children, which will be implemented by a consortium of 14 governmental and non- governmental organizations. (29) The commission also launched the Internal Child Safeguarding and Protection framework with support from Save the Children. The framework establishes awareness programs for school principals on child protection issues. (9) However, budget cuts have hampered the NCWC’s ability to effectively implement its programs, including providing shelter homes for children. Bhutanese officials have also commented on the lack of protection, probation, and child welfare officers due to the budget cuts. (30,31)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government has established policies to address child labor. (22)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 9). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 9. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Women and Children Hotlines†	Respond to issues related to women and children, including human trafficking cases, and provide emergency assistance and referral services. (25) One hotline is run through the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) and is managed by a team of counselors, providing counseling and legal services. MOLHR also has a hotline that can receive anonymous complaints about child labor abuses. MOLHR’s online system is for employers and employees to report complaints and accidents. (26) Research was unable to determine if the hotlines were operational during the reporting period.
Shelters for Vulnerable Women and Children†	Includes Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women (RENEW), a Thimphu-based NGO that receives government funding, and provides shelter, counseling, and survivor services for women and children who have been victims of human trafficking. (27) The Nazhoen Lamtoen Children Halfway Home also provides shelter, counseling, and support services to children, in part through government funding. (32,33) Both shelters were operational during the reporting period. (34)
Promoting Rights-Based Multi-Sectoral Responses to Prevent Trafficking in Persons in Bhutan (2019–2022)	Program funded by the USDOS Trafficking in Persons Office and implemented by the UNODC to improve Bhutanese police investigation skills regarding human trafficking cases, improve information sharing, and implement the government’s Standard Operating Procedure for Multi-Sectoral Responses to Prevent Trafficking in Persons in Bhutan. (27) During the reporting period, the government, in collaboration with the UNODC, conducted 7 awareness programs on countering human trafficking for over 2,600 students. (35)

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Royal Government of Bhutan.

Although the 12th Five-Year Plan (2018–2023) has a goal to achieve universal student attendance and improve education for primary students by 2023, research was unable to determine whether the plan has been implemented. (11,22) In addition, while Bhutan has programs that address child labor, research found that the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem in all relevant sectors, particularly regarding child labor in agriculture, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Bhutan (Table 10).

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Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Increase the minimum age for work from age 13 to age 15 to meet international standards.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery.	2021 – 2022
	Make primary education compulsory and establish a compulsory age for education that is the same as the minimum age for work.	2010 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit child trafficking without needing proof of the use of force, fraud, or coercion.	2018 – 2022
	Make publicly available the legal statute that prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into Bhutan's military.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources has adequate financial and human resources to employ enough labor inspectors, provide adequate training and refresher courses to inspectors, and carry out an adequate number of labor inspections.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure inspections are allowed based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents, including on private farms and in homes.	2021 – 2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement information, including training for criminal investigators and the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties imposed.	2010 – 2022
	Publish labor law enforcement information, including labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, number of inspections conducted at worksites, and the number of child labor violations found. Ensure that data are disaggregated by labor violation type and penalties imposed.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information about the referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Publish information on the activities undertaken by the Child Labor Task Force.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Commission for Women and Children receives enough funding to effectively implement its programs, including providing shelter, protection, probation, and child welfare services to children.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt a comprehensive policy or national action plan that addresses the worst forms of child labor and includes child labor prevention strategies.	2014 – 2022
Social Programs	Conduct a national child labor survey, including research to determine child labor activities in farming and construction, and publish the results.	2013 – 2022
	Implement programs to make education more accessible for stateless children, children living in remote locations, children from nomadic communities and migrant populations, and children with disabilities, including by improving transportation to schools and ensuring that children have access to identity documents for school enrollment.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information about the activities undertaken to implement the 12th Five-Year Plan on an annual basis.	2022
	Publish information on whether hotlines and shelters are operational, including the number of survivors served by each program.	2022
	Create social programs that contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor, including in agriculture, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Bolivia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government increased its number of labor inspectors from 72 to 123 and launched a new national action plan to address human trafficking. The municipal government of Santa Cruz also trained 300 university students to volunteer in the Market Spaces program, which is designed to offer services and support to children who work in the markets with their families. However, children in Bolivia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced begging. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the harvesting of Brazil nuts, and mining. Although Bolivian law requires that apprentices attend school, it does not set a minimum age for participation in apprenticeships. In addition, prohibitions against child trafficking are insufficient because they require that the use of threats, force, or coercion be proven for a trafficking crime to have occurred. The government also did not publicly release information in 2022 on its criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Bolivia.

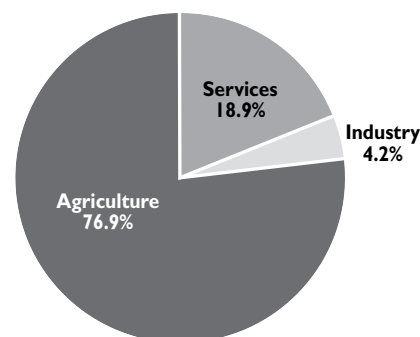
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	7 to 14	15.4 (286,890)
Attending School (%)	7 to 14	97.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	14.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		92.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta de Hogares (EH), 2020. (2)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 7-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting Brazil nuts/chestnuts† and sugarcane† (3)
	Plucking chickens (4,5)
	Planting and harvesting corn (6)
Industry	Mining† of gold, silver, tin, and zinc (3,7)
	Construction, including heavy lifting and shoveling (3)
	Production of bricks† (3,8)
Services	Street vending, shoe shining, and assisting transportation operators (3,9,10)
	Cleaning cemeteries (grave sites) (11,12)
	Domestic work (3)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, mining, ranching, and in the production and harvesting of Brazil nuts and sugarcane (13,14)
	Forced begging (3,14)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,15)
	Use in illicit activities, including robbery and producing or transporting drugs (13,14)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.







Rural and poor Bolivians, most of whom are indigenous, and LGBTQI+ youth are particularly at risk for sex and labor trafficking. (14,16) Girls, averaging 14 years old, are used in commercial sexual exploitation in El Alto. (17) Girls ages 13 to 17 are increasingly lured by sex traffickers via social media with fake offers of modeling or employment. (16) Bolivian children are taken from rural areas to major cities and mining centers for commercial sexual exploitation. (16) Civil society groups also report that child sex tourism has become an increasing problem. (14,16) Bolivia has no shelters for boys who have been sexually exploited, and many cases involving the exploitation of boys go unreported due to social stigma. (3) In addition, the cultural practice known as *padrinazgo*, which involves rural families sending their children to urban areas to live with individuals for better access to education, social services, and food, often leads to forced labor, including in domestic work and third-party businesses. (13) The government has not published any comprehensive data on child labor since 2016. (3)

Attendance rates for secondary education remain low in rural areas. (10) Civil society has reported a steady rise in the number of Venezuelan migrants electing to stay in Bolivia, most of whom lack legal status. The children of these families often struggle to obtain the proper paperwork to enroll in the public school system. (3,17) Migrant children attending school do not receive credit and are prevented from receiving diplomas. (18) There is also a lack of teachers, schools, and textbooks in rural areas, especially in indigenous communities. (3)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Bolivia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Bolivia’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including insufficient prohibitions against child trafficking as they require that the use of threats, force, or coercion be proven for a crime to have taken place.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Articles 8 and 58 of the General Labor Law; Article 129 of the Child and Adolescent Code; Sentence 0025/2017 of the Plurinational Constitutional Tribunal; Article 3 of Law No. 1139 (19-22)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 58 and 59 of the General Labor Law; Articles 5 and 136 of the Child and Adolescent Code (19,20)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 136 of the Child and Adolescent Code (20)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 15, 46, and 61 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Article 34 of the Comprehensive Law against Human Trafficking and Smuggling (23-25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 15 of the Constitution; Articles 6, 34, and 35 of the Comprehensive Law against Human Trafficking and Smuggling (23,25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 34 and 35 of the Comprehensive Law against Human Trafficking and Smuggling; Articles 281 bis, 321, 321 bis, 322, and 323 bis of the Penal Code (25,26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 47, 48, and 56 of the Law on Coca and Controlled Substances (27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16*	Article 2 of the General Directive of Pre-Military Recruitment; Articles 2 and 7 of the Law of National Military Service (28,29)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	No		Articles 108 and 249 of the Constitution; Article 1 of Supreme Decree No. 1875; Article 1 of Supreme Decree No. 21479 (23,30,31)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17‡	Article 81 of the Constitution; Articles 1, 8, 9, and 11–14 of the Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Education Law (23,32)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 17 and 81 of the Constitution; Article 1 of the Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Education Law; Article 115 of the Child and Adolescent Code (20,23,32)

*The minimum age for combat is 18 per Article 36 of the Law of National Military Service. (28)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (23,32)

As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (20,22) Furthermore, although Bolivian law specifies that education is compulsory through secondary school, it does not specify a start or end age. (23,32) In addition, prohibitions against child trafficking are insufficient because they require that the use of threats, force, or coercion be proven in order for a crime to have taken place. (23,25) Bolivian law requires employers to grant apprentices the time necessary to attend school. However, it does not set a minimum age of at least 14 for participation in apprenticeships. (19) Articles 108 and 249 of the Constitution require Bolivian males to perform compulsory military service in accordance with national law. (23) Article 1 of Supreme Decree No. 1875, passed in 2014, lowered the minimum age at which compulsory military service may begin, from age 18, as previously established, to age 17, which does not comply with international standards. (30,31)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws. (4) Refers cases to the Labor Courts for adjudication of penalties and unpaid wages. (4) Engages municipal Offices of the Child Advocate to ensure the protection of children's rights and carries out inspections through its special unit for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor. (33,34) Assists in the implementation of the Child and Adolescent Code. (20,33) MOL can investigate cases of hazardous child labor through routine investigations or from citizens who report a potential problem. If a child is discovered working in hazardous or illegal conditions during an investigation, the case is referred to the municipal Child Advocate Office. (3) In 2022, MOL presented a proposal to the national government to help guide future actions to address child labor titled, "Public Policy Bolivia: A Country Free of Forced, Dangerous, and Child Labor." (18,34)
Municipal Offices of the Child Advocate	Authorize children from the age of 14 to engage in work and register them in the government's Child and Adolescent Information System (SINNA). (17,22,33) Protect the rights and welfare of children by referring criminal child labor cases to prosecutors and by referring children to social services. (20,33) SINNA is administered by the Ministry of Justice and Transparency. (20,22)
Prosecutor's Office	Enforces criminal laws against forced labor, commercial sexual exploitation including child sex trafficking, and the use of children in illicit activities at the departmental level, in coordination with the Attorney General. (3,18,35) Provides legal support and lawyers for children who are survivors of the worst forms of child labor. (3) The Attorney General's Office oversees investigations and prosecutions at the national level and regional prosecutors who, in conjunction with the Bolivian National Police, pursue cases of human trafficking and maintain a database of these cases. (35)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Bolivia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	72 (36)	123 (34)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (17)	Yes (19)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (17)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (17)	423 (34)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (17)	0 (34)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (17)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (36)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (36)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (36)	Yes (3)

The MOL's Employment and Social Welfare office reported employing 123 labor inspectors. (34) Research indicates that Bolivia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (18,37,38) According to NGOs, the training that labor inspectors received in 2022 was much shorter than the 4-month training course previously offered. (3) However, the MOL trained 8,850 people to help prevent child and forced labor in 2022 but did not specify who received the training. (34) Research could not determine whether unannounced inspections are permitted. (19) While the municipal Offices of the Child Advocate are charged with registering work permits for children ages 14 and older, reports indicate that up to 15 percent of municipalities in Bolivia lack a local office. Many more are reported to lack sufficient resources and the capacity to perform their mandate and raise awareness of children's rights and their parents' obligations under the Child and Adolescent Code. (4,13,33) In a 2021 interview, the Ombudsman's Office acknowledged that the registration of adolescent workers by these offices was insufficient and that the low numbers of registrations reported do not reflect the reality of child labor in Bolivia. (39)

If a child labor violation is found, an inspector's report serves as the official complaint and details in the report are the evidence that inspectors transfer to labor judges, who then adjudicate the cases. The judge is the final arbiter and determines penalties for violations. (3) The special unit for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor conducted 423 inspections using 8 mobile office units, primarily in rural and remote areas, and did not find any child labor violations. (34) Although a high proportion of children work in the informal economy, this sector is not subject to labor inspections. (34,40) The MOL, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Justice do not have a consolidated database or systematized records of the number of violations found related to child labor. (17) In previous reporting periods, the MOL reported that its budget was insufficient to perform the number of labor inspections that should be conducted. (4,17)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Bolivia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal law enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown (17)	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (17)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (3)

In 2022, Bolivian officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Government, and Justice met with experts from the EU-funded EUROFRONT program to discuss border management strategies and a regional plan to address trafficking in persons on the Peruvian-Bolivian border area of Desaguadero and the Argentinian-Bolivian border area of Aguas Blancas. The Bolivian Police Academy, with IOM support, trained 70 officials, including police officers, prosecutors, and judges on the investigation and prosecution of trafficking in persons crimes. (16,18) The 6-month training program included 240 hours of academic instruction followed by 560 hours of investigative practice and on-the-job training. In addition, 65 prosecutors received training on human trafficking from UNODC. (16) Although the government did not provide the number or type of officials who received training, a civil society group reported that a course titled "Diploma in the Investigation of Trafficking in Persons aimed at Public Police Servants," organized by the Police University, the Bolivian senate, and IOM launched in July of 2022 to strengthen the government's response to human trafficking. The Trafficking in Persons Council also met 17 times in 2022 and led an effort to draft new amendments to the human trafficking law. (16)

The Government of Bolivia did not take active measures to investigate, prosecute, convict, or sentence perpetrators of worst forms of child labor crimes. (17) The high rate of rotation among police, prosecutors, and judges—a standard practice to help prevent corruption—leads to insufficient knowledge, a lack of experience on human trafficking, and a judicial backlog for these types of cases. (14,41) Reporting indicates that the budget, personnel, and resources of the judicial system are insufficient to address human trafficking. Although the amount dedicated to human trafficking is not reported, less than 0.5 percent of the entire federal budget is devoted to the judicial system, implying inadequate resources. (16) Furthermore, in 2022 the judiciary returned unused funds to the executive branch, suggesting that its budget is not implemented in the most productive manner. Civil society groups reported that trafficking in persons crimes in developed areas received more judicial attention compared to rural areas where there are few resources for the legal system. (16,18) In addition, research found that children rescued from the worst forms of child labor are often not referred to social services providers because some cities lack shelters and other social services for children. (13,42,43) Shelters maintained by departmental governments are underfunded, and child survivors are often cast out of shelters on the basis of

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fixed timelines—after spending the maximum number of days allowed—rather than an assessment of need. (42) The government did not report the number of children referred to receive social services in 2022. While children can report workforce abuse to the Child Advocate’s Office, they rarely do. (13)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor	Coordinates national efforts on child labor issues. Led by MOL, and includes the Ministries of Justice, Education, and Planning, and several NGOs. (33) Research was unable to determine whether the coordinating body carried out activities during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Plurinational Policy Against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (2021–2025)†	On April 29, 2022, the government released a new national action plan for 2021-2025, with support from IOM, UNODC, and civil society. It contains several objectives including to educate the population about human trafficking and smuggling, reintegrate survivors, train law enforcement officials, provide prompt and effective justice, promote mechanisms of international coordination, produce and manage knowledge, and build an institutional environment able to address human trafficking and smuggling. (16) The government did not provide information about the resources devoted to implement this plan. (16)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

The government has lacked a national action plan to address child labor since the National Plan for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor expired in 2010. (44)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Juancito Pinto Subsidy Program†	Government program that provides a conditional cash transfer to all primary and some secondary school students to increase school attendance and reduce the dropout rate. (45) According to the latest publicly available information from the Education Ministry, the program provided financial support to more than 2.3 million participating students to encourage school retention. Each participating child received approximately \$29 annually upon proving regular attendance in school. (3) The Government of Bolivia continued to support this program throughout the reporting period. (3)
Market Spaces	Each year, the Santa Cruz municipal government trains over 300 university volunteers and reaches over 500 young children between the ages of 3 and 12 in the 8 Santa Cruz markets. (3) Children who previously worked with their parents in the market now receive mentorship and food, and abuse is monitored and reported. Most of the workers in the Market Space project are psychology, education, or social work university students in their final year at university and volunteer their time to prevent child labor. (46) The concept was initially supported by the Government of Santa Cruz and UNICEF and costs about \$5,000 per year to maintain but is now self-sustaining through a small tax collected from each market vendor or parent. (46) The Government of Bolivia continued to support this program throughout the reporting period. (3)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
Bolivian Foreign Trade Institute's Triple Seal Initiative	Initiative of the Department of Santa Cruz's MOL, in collaboration with the Bolivian Institute of Standardization and Quality, UNICEF, and ILO, to develop a voluntary certification program that recognizes companies that comply with Bolivian law and ILO conventions on child labor and forced labor issues. (47) In January 2022, the largest sugar producer in the country, responsible for 40 percent of the market, was issued the triple seal certification. (14) Reports from the current period suggest that this partnership has been successful at reducing child labor in the sugarcane industry. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Bolivia.

The government has funded a school breakfast program since 1994. Currently, approximately 74 percent of students nationwide receive this service. (3) Although the Government of Bolivia has implemented programs in the agricultural and education sectors, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children in commercial sexual exploitation.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Bolivia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 17 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits child trafficking by removing the requirement of the use of threats, force, or coercion to be established for the crime to have occurred.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law prohibits children under the age of 14 from participating in apprenticeships.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes age 18 as the minimum age for compulsory recruitment by the state military and criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2015 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on child labor law enforcement, including labor inspectorate funding, training, penalties imposed and collected, and whether routine and unannounced inspections were conducted.	2009 – 2022
	Publish information about whether unannounced inspections are permitted.	2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 123 to 432 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 6.5 million.	2013 – 2022
	Provide sufficient funding to increase the Ministry of Labor's capacity to ensure the adequate enforcement of child labor laws.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that there are systematized records or a consolidated database on the number of violations found related to child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Establish and maintain an Office of the Child Advocate in every municipality, allocating sufficient resources from municipal-level budgets to ensure that legal protections are extended to all children who are permitted to work, and that parents are assisted in registering their children for work.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators and disaggregated numbers on investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and sentences imposed for child labor crimes.	2011 – 2022
	Address issues of high rotation among police, prosecutors, and judges, as well as the existing judicial case backlog, to ensure adequate prosecution of child labor crimes.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that rural areas receive sufficient resources to address trafficking in persons crimes.	2022
	Coordination	Ensure that the National Commission for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor is active and able to carry out its intended mandate.
Government Policies	Establish and implement a new national policy or national action plan to address child labor, including its worst forms.	2010 – 2022
	Provide data on the funding or resources supporting the Plurinational Policy Against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants.	2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Conduct a comprehensive child labor survey so there is sufficient data to inform government actions to eliminate child labor.	2022
	Ensure that all children, regardless of migration status, can access education and receive credit and diplomas for attending, and expand national programs in rural and indigenous areas to increase secondary school attendance.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that there are sufficient social programs, including shelters for male survivors of human trafficking, throughout the country for child labor survivors and that survivors are not cast prematurely out of shelters.	2018 – 2022
	Implement programs to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2022

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In 2022, Bosnia and Herzegovina made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Council of Ministers approved the 2021–2025 National Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma, which aims to strength education access for Roma children, and the Anti-Trafficking Strike Force expanded its membership to include representatives from additional agencies. The Tuzla Cantonal Court also sentenced six offenders to a total of 74 years of imprisonment, a historical first for the judicial system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, children in Bosnia and Herzegovina are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging. Social programs dedicated to assisting children involved in forced begging do not have adequate resources, and representatives from the Ministries of Labor are not included in the National Anti-Trafficking Strike Force, which limits coordination efforts. Furthermore, most child labor is in the informal sector, and laws on the minimum age for work do not meet international standards because they do not apply to children who are self-employed or those working outside of formal employment relationships.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	8.9 (44,017)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	83.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	10.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3 (MICS 3), 2006. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including vending and washing car windows (3-5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging and forced domestic work (5,6)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,6)
	Use in illicit activities, including for pickpocketing (5-7)
	Use in the production of pornography (5,6)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Street begging is the most common form of child labor in BiH, and organized groups sometimes traffic children to regional and EU countries, where they are forced to beg. (3,7-10) In BiH, Roma children are the most vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor due to barriers to accessing education, including the high costs of school supplies and uniforms. (11,12) Roma students also face discrimination from teachers, peers, and school administrators, which has resulted in a disproportionate number of Roma children being enrolled in schools for children with intellectual disabilities. In addition, some Roma children lack birth registration documents, which are

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required to attend school in BiH. (13) UNHCR reports indicate that some children in BiH were still designated as being at risk of statelessness in 2022. (5,13,14) Children who are classified as stateless are at higher risk for labor exploitation. (14,15) Additionally, migrants—particularly unaccompanied children—from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and other countries who travel through BiH are potential targets for human traffickers. (16,17)

Schools in the Republika Srpska (RS) entity deny the right of some Bosniak children to receive instruction in the Bosnian language; as a result, these children sometimes travel long distances to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) entity to receive education in their language. (3,14,18) In addition, discrimination persists under the "Two Schools Under One Roof" practice between Bosniaks and Croats in FBiH. Under this system, Bosniak and Croat children are in segregated classes following separate curricula in the same school building. (19) This creates obstacles for students who wish to attend schools other than those that match their ethnic identity and enables ethnic discrimination in schools, which can lead to absenteeism. (3,14,18) Children with disabilities also face barriers to accessing education, which may make them vulnerable to child labor. (18) Sources indicated that the government has not allocated enough financial resources for adequate implementation of inclusive education initiatives, particularly for students with disabilities. (15,18,20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

BiH has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

BiH is a democratic republic with a bicameral parliament. Governmental responsibilities lie with the state; the two entities of BiH, which are the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS); and the self-governing Brčko District (BD). (21) The Government of BiH has established laws and regulations related to child labor at the state, entity, and district levels (Table 4). However, gaps exist in BiH's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections for children who are self-employed or working outside a formal employment relationship.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 20 of the Labor Law of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 57 of the Labor Law of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (23)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 42, 57, and 171 of the Labor Law of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 185 and 186a of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Article II of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (26,27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 185 and 186a of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina (24)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 186 and 187 of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina (24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 195 of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina (27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 9 of the Law on the Service in the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (31)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 9 of the Law on the Service in the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (31)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 173(e) of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina (27)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 16 of the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (32)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 16 of the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (32)

* Country has no conscription (31)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (32)

The labor laws of FBiH, RS, and BD do not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected by the minimum age to work because the labor laws do not apply to children who are self-employed or working outside of formal employment relationships. In addition, FBiH, RS, and BD do not include street begging in their lists of hazardous occupations prohibited for children. (22-27) Although the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina BiH criminalizes human trafficking for forced labor, it fails to specifically outlaw forced labor, debt bondage, and slavery separately from trafficking in persons. (28) Laws related to illicit activities in BiH are also not sufficient because using, procuring, and offering children for the production and trafficking of drugs are not criminally prohibited. Moreover, the laws of BiH and FBiH do not meet international standards for the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children, and legislation in BiH, FBiH, RS, and BD do not meet international standards for the recruitment of minors by non-state armed groups, as their criminal codes fail to explicitly prohibit this offense. (24)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	Enforces labor laws, including those on child labor. (5) The Cantonal-Level Labor Inspectorates (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Ministry of Labor and Veterans' Labor Inspectorate (Republika Srpska), and the Administrative Support Department (Brčko District) enforce labor laws at the canton, entity, and district levels respectively. (22,27,29)
State Investigative and Protection Agency (SIPA) and Border Police (SBP)	SIPA investigates human trafficking crimes and enforces anti-trafficking laws across the entire country. SBP identifies victims of human trafficking at the border. (5,6,30)
State, Entity, and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Cantonal-Level Prosecutors' Offices	Prosecute human trafficking, forced labor, enticement to prostitution, and forced begging cases at their respective levels, based on applicable laws. (5,6)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in BiH took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of appropriate referral mechanisms.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	133 (10)	191 (33)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (23)	Yes (22,27,29)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (33)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	105,460 (10)	302,905 (32)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (10)	0 (33)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (33)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (33)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23-25)	Yes (22,27,29)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (33)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (33)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (33)

Officials indicated that there were sufficient resources provided to the Labor Inspectorates and that the number of labor inspectors appeared to be adequate. In 2022, labor inspectors received training on labor law enforcement and the identification of hazardous work and human trafficking. (5) The Labor Inspectorate is authorized to assess administrative penalties up to approximately \$555 (1,000 *konvertibilna marka*), and labor inspectors in both entities and BD may visit formal sector worksites without prior supervisory approval. (5,22-27) Complaint mechanisms also exist in both entities and BD, including a mechanism for receiving online complaints, but research found that BiH does not have an official system for referring children identified during labor inspections to social services providers unless they are victims of human trafficking. (29)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in BiH took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient training for responsible enforcement authorities.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (33)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	9 (32)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	7 (32)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	20 (32)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (32)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Unknown

Forced begging cases are pursued by cantonal- and entity-level police and cantonal-, entity-, and state-level prosecutors. Children who are detained for begging are generally referred to social services providers, which are often run by NGOs with funding from the Ministry of Security or the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees. (5,9,32) However, law enforcement officials sometimes penalize child victims of forced begging by issuing fines against the children. (17,33,34) Research also indicates that law enforcement officials and social workers would benefit from additional training on identifying children used for forced labor and begging, as these cases are often misclassified as child negligence or simply "Roma custom" (referring to higher rates of participation in the informal market). (4,17)

In November 2022, the Tuzla Cantonal Court sentenced 6 offenders to a total of 74 years of imprisonment, a historical first for the judicial system in BiH as the highest sentence for trafficking in persons in BiH to date and also the first conviction for organized human trafficking for child labor exploitation. (5) However, some courts continue to impose sentences under the legal minimum or dismiss charges against perpetrators altogether. (5,37,38) In addition, enforcement officials are often unwilling to pursue investigations and prosecutions against parents involved in the trafficking of their children, particularly for forced labor, and shelters subsequently return children to the parents who were involved in the trafficking process. (5,17)

Additionally, in December 2022, the Court of BiH concluded a 4-year case involving international trafficking in human beings, including minors, for the purposes of labor exploitation and involvement in criminal offenses and ultimately sentenced 5 individuals to a total of 33 years of prison. Two defendants were each sentenced to 12 years of prison and were also ordered to pay back illicit gains in the amount of \$423,975 (389,887 euros). (32) One defendant was sentenced to five years in prison and a fine of \$5,560 (10,000 *konvertibilna marka*), and the other 2 defendants were each sentenced to 2 years in prison (with a fine in 1 case of \$2,780 (5,000 *konvertibilna marka*)). (5,6,32)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of inclusion of all relevant agencies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Department of the State Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons (State Coordinator) within the Ministry of Security (MOS)	Coordinates human trafficking survivor protection efforts among relevant ministries at the entity-level and among prosecutors at the state-, entity-, and local-levels, as well as with NGOs. (11,31,35) Oversees the human trafficking database, which includes data from NGOs, SIPA, SBP, and police agencies and prosecutors' offices at all levels. (31,35,36) Publishes data from this database in its annual report on human trafficking. Oversees shelter management and monitors NGO compliance with the agreed-upon provisions on survivors' assistance. (31,36) During the reporting period, the National Coordinator's Office allocated approximately \$71,406 (130,000 <i>konvertibilna marka</i>) to fund 7 NGOs, providing support and housing to survivors of human trafficking. (5)

Although the Anti-Trafficking Strike Force is meant to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts across agencies, representatives from FBiH and RS Ministries of Labor are not included. (2,7,39)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of existing policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2020–2023)	Includes activities to prevent forced labor, including child labor. (3) During the reporting period, the Anti-Trafficking Strike Force established by the Strategy continued to meet regularly and was expanded to include representation from the Service for Foreigners' Affairs per the guidance of MOS. (5)
Guidelines for Work of Regional Monitoring Teams	Enhance the cooperation of monitoring team members and the National Referral Mechanism. (30,40) Include a section on mixed migration flows, in which unaccompanied migrant children and victims of human trafficking are addressed. (30) During the reporting period, the regional monitoring teams continued to meet regularly and implemented their respective annual action plans. (5)
Protocol on Cooperation and Treatment in Cases of Unlawful Behavior to the Detriment of Children in Sarajevo Canton	Prevents begging, exploitation of children, and abuse of children in Canton Sarajevo. (39,40) Sets rules on state cooperation for victim protection and mandates the provision of physical, psychological, health, and social protection for children. (40) Research was unable to determine whether the Protocol was active during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (10)

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In April 2022, the Council of Ministers approved the 2021–2025 National Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma, which calls for higher rates of civil registration of Roma, more opportunities for fair employment, and better educational outcomes for Roma children, all of which factor into lower child labor participation rates. (5,41,42)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including a lack of adequate funding.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Daily Centers†	Centers for Social Welfare-supported and NGO-operated drop-in centers in seven locations across the country, designed to assist vulnerable street children. (11,31,39) Provide direct assistance to children, including educational activities, counseling, food, and hygiene. (3) Sarajevo's Center for Social Welfare Mobile Team also engages in daily outreach to children on the streets and to families in vulnerable communities throughout the capital region. (3) During the reporting period, the centers continued to operate normally and provided children involved in begging and other forms of street work with material and educational support. (5) However, Sarajevo's Mobile Team staff continues to lack sufficient resources for their work, especially reliable transportation. (31,43) Daily Centers also lack consistent financial and technical support, which may limit the ability of these centers to identify and assist children working on the streets. (30,35,46) In addition, support for street children outside Sarajevo varies significantly. (3) Although the government provides some social services for low-income families through the Centers for Social Welfare, many families do not receive enough assistance to reduce their reliance on child labor, especially begging. (31,43,45)
Assistance for Trafficking Victims†	Government program that allocates small grants to local NGOs for the provision of shelter and social services to survivors of human trafficking, including counseling, educational assistance and job training for domestic survivors, and visa and legal services for foreign survivors of human trafficking. (3,20) In 2022, the government allocated approximately \$71,406 (130,000 <i>konvertibilna marka</i>) to support designated NGOs. (5)
Prevention and Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Joint project by the EU and the Council of Europe with \$790,720 in funding over 3 years to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in its efforts to better identify victims of human trafficking and heighten public awareness of human trafficking. (46,47) Activities include training for labor inspectors, police officers, healthcare providers, and education professionals. (20) During the reporting period, the Office of the State Coordinator submitted its final report on its anti-trafficking efforts in 2021 to the Council of Ministers. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of BiH.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in BiH (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those who are self-employed or working outside of formal employment relationships.	2015 – 2022
	Criminalize forced labor, debt bondage, and slavery separately from human trafficking in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko District.	2018 – 2022
Legal Framework	Ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including the use, procurement, and offering of a child for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the laws criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include sectors in which child labor is known to occur, including street begging.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina's legislation criminally prohibits using children for prostitution, production of pornography, and pornographic performances.	2019 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Collect and publish information on labor and criminal law enforcement efforts, including labor inspectorate funding.	2015 – 2022
	Create an official mechanism for referring children identified during labor inspections to social services providers.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that children are not penalized for being victims of the worst forms of child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that law enforcement, judiciary officials, and social services providers are trained on indicators of child trafficking—including trafficking of migrant children—and are able to properly identify victims, classify violations, use referral mechanisms, and prosecute offenders.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors receive training on all sectors in which child labor is known to occur, including hazardous work in agriculture.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that all relevant ministries are represented in the Anti-Trafficking Strike Force.	2017 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that the government publishes information on activities conducted under policies that address child labor, including the Protocol on Cooperation and Treatment in Cases of Unlawful Behavior to the Detriment of Children in Canton Sarajevo.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that inclusive education initiatives receive adequate funding to support activities aimed toward improving academic outcomes for vulnerable children.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that all children have access to education by eliminating school-related fees, accommodating children with disabilities, and preventing discrimination against minority students.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that all children have access to birth registration or identity documentation required to enroll in school.	2011 – 2022
	Allow Bosniak children in RS to access education in the Bosnian language and end the "Two Schools Under One Roof" practice to eliminate discrimination in schools based on ethnicity in FBiH.	2018 – 2022
	Provide programs such as Daily Centers and Centers for Social Welfare with adequate financial and technical resources to assist vulnerable families and survivors of child labor.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure sufficient resources to provide social services and education to potential and actual victims of domestic or international human trafficking, including unaccompanied minors.	2014 – 2022
	Establish programs to support street children living outside of Sarajevo.	2019 – 2022

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In 2022, Botswana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government ratified the International Labor Organization's Labor Inspection Convention and the Labor Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, which outline mandates to promote effective labor inspection systems, including in the agricultural sector in which child labor is prevalent in the country. The Ministry of Labor also provided comprehensive information on its labor law enforcement efforts and partnered with a local non-governmental organization to conduct targeted inspections in key districts where there have been reports of child labor on commercial farms and cattle posts. However, children in Botswana are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in cattle herding and domestic work. Key gaps remain in the country's legal framework, including the lack of a minimum age for compulsory education and a list of hazardous work activities for children. The government also did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. In addition, the design and implementation of social programs to address child labor are insufficient to fully address the scope of the problem, especially in commercial sexual exploitation, cattle herding, and domestic work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Botswana. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Herding and spraying of cattle and goats (3-5)
	Farming, including rearing livestock, mending fences, and molding bricks (5)
Services	Street work, including vending (6)
	Domestic work (7,8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,9-11)
	Forced labor in cattle herding (11)
	Forced labor in domestic service (11)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Children in Botswana are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (9,12) Research indicates that some children residing in the Dukwi Refugee Camp are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation around the camp, as they await decisions regarding their refugee status. (6,11) Some parents in poor rural communities send their children to engage in domestic work in cities, or at farms or cattle posts, increasing their vulnerability to forced labor. (11) Children, particularly from the San minority ethnic group, work on commercial farms in the Ghanzi Region, tending to and herding cattle. (7,9) An NGO reported that one of the work activities children perform on commercial farms is the "dipping" (spraying) of cattle, a process to remove ticks and flies. Such work may expose children to hazardous chemicals. (7) On some farms, employers may withhold food rations unless children perform work. (3,7,12) Children working in domestic service settings are exposed to various conditions that are indicative of forced labor, including confinement; denial of promised educational opportunities and basic necessities; and physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. (11)

Botswana law provides for free basic education, and the costs of books, uniforms, and other materials may be waived for children from poorer families. However, insufficient transportation to schools in remote regions of Botswana and a lack of materials in indigenous languages create educational barriers for children from minority ethnic groups. (5,9,13,14) In addition, school enrollment requires an identity document, such as a birth certificate or national identity card. (12) The government allows all children to enroll in primary education, even without these documents; however, migrant children and children born outside of health care facilities, or whose parents did not register them at birth, may not be able to enroll in secondary schools or register for national exams. (5,9,15) Schools also often lack adequate resources for students with disabilities. Children of the San ethnic group have limited access to educational facilities, must travel long distances to reach schools, and encounter language barriers and prejudice within schools, which cause children to drop out. (9,14,16,17) Moreover, pervasive physical and sexual abuse, including gender-based violence within schools, by both teachers and peers, contributes to children leaving education early and becoming vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (3,6,18,19)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Botswana has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

During the reporting period, the government acceded to the ILO Labor Inspection Convention (C. 81) and the Labor Inspection (Agriculture) Convention (C. 189), which outline principles for development of strong labor inspection systems, including in the agricultural sector in which child labor occurs in Botswana. (5,20)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Botswana's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of a compulsory education age that is consistent with the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 2 and 107 of the Employment Act (21)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 110 of the Employment Act (21)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 71 of the Employment Act; Section 114 of the Children's Act; Articles 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Section 262 of the Penal Code (21-24)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 114 of the Children's Act; Article 175 of the Penal Code; Articles 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (22-24)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 25 and 57–59 of the Children's Act; Sections 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (22,23)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 60 of the Children's Act (23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 17 of the Botswana Defense Force Act (25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 26 of the Children's Act (23)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 18 of the Children's Act (23)

* Country has no conscription (25)

The Employment Act allows children to conduct light work activities at age 14, with restrictions on the number of hours a child can work during a single day and in a week, and includes a requirement that the Labor Commissioner approve any forms of work outside of domestic service; however, the government has yet to determine the conditions or types of light work activities permitted for children. (13) Additionally, while the Employment Act prohibits night work and underground work for children, the government has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (10,14,21) In addition, legal protections for children from commercial sexual exploitation do not meet international standards because the use of children for prostitution is not criminally prohibited. (23) Despite the provision of free basic education, there is not a compulsory education age, which may increase children's vulnerability to child labor. (14)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs	Enforces child labor laws and conducts inspections under the Employment Act. (21,26) Facilitates coordination with local leaders and law enforcement officers. Posts labor inspectors to District Council offices to carry out their duties. (26) Coordinates with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), and MLGRD's District and Municipal Council Child Welfare Divisions, to respond to cases of child labor and place children in safe environments. (6,26,27) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor partnered with a local NGO to conduct targeted inspections in the Ghanzi and Kgalagadi Districts, where child labor has been reported on commercial farms and cattle posts. Research, however, indicates a need for increased inspections in these districts given their geographical size. (5)
Botswana Police Service (BPS)	Responds to cases of labor law violation, including child labor violations, based on referrals from the Ministry of Labor. (28) Investigates cases of the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking. (26) During the reporting period, BPS established four child-friendly police stations, increasing the total number of such stations to five. (29) BPS also conducted educational campaigns in schools to teach teachers and students about trafficking in persons. (30)
Ministry of Justice	Monitors suspected human trafficking cases and leads the Human Trafficking (Prohibition) Committee. (11)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Botswana took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (9)	Unknown (5,31)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (9)	50 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (21)	No (21)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (9)	No (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (9)	1,007 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (9)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (9)	N/A (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (9)	N/A (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (9)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (21)	Yes (21)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (21)	Yes (21)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (5)

Under the Employment Act, child labor violations are criminal offenses, resulting in 12 months imprisonment; as such, Botswana labor inspectors refer violations to police for investigation and imposition of penalties. (21)

Research indicates that Botswana does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (32,33) Some of Botswana's largest administrative districts have only one or two labor inspectors, which likely hinders monitoring of farms and cattle posts where there is evidence of child labor. (3,28) Furthermore, labor inspectors are not authorized to inspect domestic households, and some labor inspectors have faced obstacles in accessing large farms, such as locked gates or denial of entry, inhibiting their ability to identify underage workers. (3,6) Although two labor officers participated in a workshop organized by a local NGO on child labor concepts, the rest of the labor inspectorate did not receive comprehensive training during the reporting period. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Botswana took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (9)	Unknown (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (9)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	1 (34)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	1 (34)	Unknown (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (34)	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (5)

The lack of child-friendly courts and social workers in Botswana leads to delays in processing cases, few referrals, and limited psychosocial support to child victims of exploitation. (29) The government did not provide criminal law enforcement data during the reporting period.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of information on steps the coordination mechanism has taken to address child labor during the reporting year.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Advisory Committee on Child Labor	Oversees government policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. Reports to the government three to four times a year. (9) Includes representatives from government agencies, various NGOs, worker federations, and employer organizations. (9) Led by the Ministry of Labor, with participation from MLGRD, Ministry of Finance, and the Office of the President. (15) At the local level, child labor coordination is handled through Child Labor Committees that include social workers; schoolteachers; members of the Village Development Committees, which are local government structures; labor inspectors; and community leaders, including chiefs and priests. (9) Research could not determine whether the Advisory Committee on Child Labor was active during the reporting period. (5,9,35)

The Ministry of Defense, Justice, and Security leads a counter-trafficking in persons coordinating body, which includes representatives from the labor inspectorate and social services. (9)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a policy to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan (2018–2022)	Supervised and coordinated by the Ministry of Defense, Justice, and Security. Encouraged interagency collaboration in eliminating and preventing trafficking in persons in Botswana, particularly trafficking of women and children, through the establishment and maintenance of a Human Trafficking (Prohibition) Committee. (31,36) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period.

Research indicates that the government is not actively supporting implementation of key national policies for the prevention and elimination of child labor. (5,9) Child labor elimination and prevention strategies are not included in relevant national policies, including the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan and the Botswana National Youth Policy. (37,38) Although Botswana had a policy to address trafficking in persons, research found no evidence of a policy related to other worst forms of child labor.

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Government-Funded Programs to Prevent and Eliminate Child Labor†	Government-funded programs that aim to prevent child labor and increase protections for vulnerable children. These include: NGO-run shelters that cater to human trafficking survivors, including children; the National School Feeding Program, which provides meals to children (grades one through seven) in all public primary schools in the country; the Remote Area Development Program, which provides a second meal to school children living in remote areas and children from marginalized communities; the Orphan Care Program, which provides orphans with meals and subsidizes the cost of school fees and transportation costs; and the Needy Children and Needy Students program, managed by MLGRD, which provides families with free meals, toiletries, and school uniforms. (26) Research indicates that these programs were active during the reporting period, but the government did not publish specific activities undertaken to implement them. (5,31)
Addressing Child Labor in Botswana*	U.S. Embassy-Gaborone-funded project, implemented by Humana People to People, a local NGO operating in Botswana that aims to raise local awareness and increase community engagement on child labor concerns, in coordination with Botswana's Minister of Labor. (39) Targets Gantsi and Tsabong, areas with high levels of poverty and close proximity to farms. During the reporting period, the project held a launch and awareness-raising event in commemoration of World Day Against Child Labor, held sensitization and training workshops, and coordinated targeted labor inspections with the Ministry of Labor's inspectorate. (39,40)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Botswana.

There are no government-run shelters that cater to child survivors of human trafficking. While the government funds and contracts with NGO-run shelters that serve this population, it does not directly provide such services. (9) An NGO reported that established shelters lack resources to attend to the needs of older children. (4) Although Botswana has programs that target child labor, the design and implementation of these programs are insufficient to fully address the scope of the problem, especially in commercial sexual exploitation, cattle herding, and domestic work.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Botswana (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken by children age 14 and above.	2016 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child for prostitution.	2020 – 2022
	Establish by law an age up to which education is compulsory that extends to the age of 15, the minimum age for employment.	2010 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 50 to 72 to provide adequate coverage of approximately 1.1 million workers.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient human and financial resources to adequately enforce labor laws, including on farms and cattle posts.	2020 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties.	2022
	Institutionalize training for all labor inspectors, including training on laws related to child labor.	2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors have authorization to access worksite premises and are able to conduct inspections at farms and domestic households.	2018 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish information about criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, including information regarding the training for criminal investigators, number of investigations related to child labor, number of prosecutions and convictions related to child labor, and penalties imposed in criminal cases related to child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement bodies have sufficient resources, personnel, and adequate training to address the worst forms of child labor.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Advisory Committee on Child Labor is active and able to carry out its intended mandate of overseeing government policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation, forced child labor, and child labor in agriculture.	2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and child wellbeing and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2017 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into relevant policies, such as the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan and the Botswana National Youth Policy.	2011 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in all sectors and activities to inform effective policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to remove educational barriers and make education accessible for all children by taking measures to reduce travel distances to reach schools; addressing language barriers and ethnic discrimination, including a lack of school materials in indigenous languages; preventing physical and sexual violence in schools; increasing resources for students with disabilities; and expanding birth registration and national identification for migrants and children born outside of health facilities.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement all key social programs related to child labor, including the shelters for victims of human trafficking, the National School Feeding Program, the Remote Area Development Program, the Orphan Care Program, and the Needy Children and Needy Students Program, and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2020 – 2022
	Establish official government-run shelters to assist child survivors of the worst forms of child labor, while ensuring that shelters have sufficient resources to attend to the care of older children.	2020 – 2022
	Develop programs to fully address the scope of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and cattle herding.	2012 – 2022

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In 2022, Brazil made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government published two updates to the national "Dirty List," which contains data on employers that the Ministry of Labor and Employment found to be using slave labor, including that of children. The updated lists were published in April and October for a total of 184 newly listed employers. The Secretariat of Labor Inspection conducted over 1,368 child labor specific operations which resulted in the removal of 2,317 children from situations of child labor; the numbers of operations and rescues were the highest recorded in the last six years. Additionally, the government launched the Information System for Confronting Human Trafficking, which aims to generate data on the purposes for and forms of recruitment, improve responses in addressing these crimes, and allow for detailed information on victims of human trafficking to be recorded. The Rio de Janeiro City government also launched the first Municipal Plan to Combat the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, which includes awareness campaigns to address and eradicate child labor. In addition, the Auxílio Brasil cash transfer program reached unprecedented levels by extending assistance to over 21.5 million families. However, children in Brazil are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture, including in the production of coffee. Although Brazil made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, prohibitions against child trafficking require the use of threats, violence, coercion, fraud, or abuse be established for the crime of child trafficking to have occurred and, therefore, do not meet international labor standards. The reported number of labor inspectors is also likely not sufficient to provide adequate coverage of the workforce, and local governments lack the capacity to fully implement and monitor the National Program to Eradicate Child Labor and other social protection programs.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Brazil. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

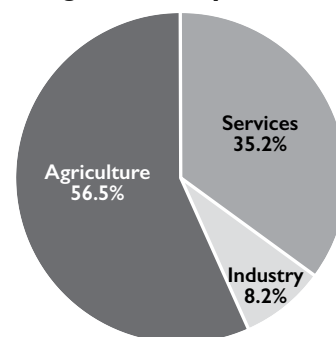
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	2.1 (638,943)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	98.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	2.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD) Continua, 2015. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting of açai and citrus fruits, and the production of bananas, cocoa, coffee, corn, cotton,† eucalyptus, grapes, mangoes, manioc, mate tea, onions, pineapples,† rice, sisal,† soy, sugarcane,† tobacco,† and watermelons (3-13)
	Cattle ranching and raising livestock, including hogs, poultry, and sheep (4,5,11)
	Fishing and harvesting mollusks† (4,5,14,15)
	Forestry, including logging,† extracting carnauba palm leaves, and producing charcoal† (4,5,11,12,16)
Industry	Slaughtering animals,† including for beef production (12,17)
	Processing manioc flour† and cashews† (11,18,19)
	Production of ceramics† and bricks† (12,16)
	Production of footwear and textiles, including garments (5,16)
	Construction† (8,12,20)
	Work in stone quarries† (16,21)
Services	Rolling straw cigarettes† (22,23)
	Street work,† including vending,† begging, washing cars,† collecting recycling,† and garbage scavenging† (8,11,16,24)
	Work in supermarkets, markets, and fairs, including hauling fruits and vegetables and transporting heavy loads (11,25)
	Restaurant food delivery, including by bicycle (26,27)
	Work in restaurants and other food and drink establishments, including selling alcoholic beverages† (11,12,24)
	Artistic and sports-related activities and cultural work (28,29)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Domestic work,† including childcare, housekeeping, and eldercare (8,11,16)
	Maintaining and repairing automobiles (11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (30,31)
	Forced domestic work (31)
	Forced begging (32)
	Forced labor in agriculture, including in the production of coffee and manioc (3,33)
	Forced labor in the production of garments, including in garment factories (34)
	Use by gangs to perform illicit activities, including drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (12,35-38)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.







The overall scope and magnitude of commercial sexual exploitation of children is unknown; however, the latest biennial report published by the Federal Highway Police, in collaboration with Childhood Brazil, identified 3,651 areas along highways throughout the country where children are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. Areas are assessed by evaluating the risk of exploitation and the implementation of preventative mechanisms and strategies that exist within each state. (30) According to the report, the states of Bahia, Goiás, Pará, Minas Gerais, and Ceará are at the highest risk for this type of exploitation. The report also indicated a 0.4 percent decrease of these vulnerable areas since its previous publication. (30) Child sex tourism is particularly common in tourist and coastal areas, and girls from other South American countries are also exploited for commercial sex in Brazil. (31)

A survey by the education-focused NGO Education for All (*Todos pela Educação*), using data from the second quarter of the 2021 Continuous Household Survey (PNAD), found that the number of children between the ages of 6 and 14 who are out of school grew 171 percent compared to the same calendar period in 2019, resulting in 244,000 children out of school, the largest number since 2012. Furthermore, the percentage of school-enrolled children fell from 98 percent in 2019 to 96.2 percent in 2021. (39) Additionally, research found that some schools, particularly those in rural areas, are overcrowded, have poor infrastructure, and lack basic resources and teachers. (8)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Brazil has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Brazil's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including deficiencies with its child trafficking prohibitions.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 403 of the Labor Code (40)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 2 of the Hazardous Work List (41)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Work List (41)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 149 and 149-A of the Penal Code; Article 13 of Law 13.344 amending Penal Code; Articles 1 and 2 of Law 12.781 (42,44)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 149-A of the Penal Code; Article 244-A of the Child and Adolescent Statute (43,45)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 218-A, 218-B, 227, and 228 of the Penal Code; Articles 240, 241, and 244-A of the Child and Adolescent Statute (42,45)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 33 and 40 of the National System of Public Policies on Drugs; Article 244-B of the Child and Adolescent Statute (45,46)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 127 of the Military Service Regulation (47)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 5 of the Military Service Law (48)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17	Article 4 of the National Education Law (49)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 4 of the National Education Law (49)

The national "Dirty List" containing information on employers found to be using slave labor, including that of children, was updated in April 2022 with 89 new names and again in October 2022 with 95 new names. (50) However, prohibitions against child trafficking require the use of threats, violence, coercion, fraud, or abuse to be established for the crime of child trafficking and, therefore, do not meet international labor standards. (43) In addition, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (40,49)

III. Enforcement of Laws on Child Labor

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE)*	Oversees the Secretariat of Labor Inspection (SIT), which is responsible for organizing, coordinating, evaluating, and monitoring all labor inspection activities, including those related to child labor and forced labor. Labor inspectors carry out a number of actions outlined in the Labor Prosecution Office's Normative Instruction No. 02 of 2021, including unannounced inspections at sites where child labor is suspected, identification and removal of children from child labor situations, and issuing of penalties. (11,51) At the start of 2023, Decree 11.359 reestablished SIT within the Ministry of Labor and Employment. (52) In 2022, SIT's Special Mobile Group to Combat Child Labor was reinstated and carried out an operation in Maranhão, which resulted in the removal of 43 minors engaged in activities included in Brazil's Hazardous Work List. The Mobile Group carries out inspections of greater technical and operational complexity, including in isolated geographical areas and for cases classified as the worst forms of child labor according to Decree 6.481. (11,41,53)
Labor Prosecution Office (MPT)	Prosecutes child labor and forced labor violations by working with prosecutors from its National Committee to Combat Child and Adolescent Labor, an in-house body that coordinates efforts to address child labor. Collects fines for forced labor violations and allocates funds for initiatives that address child labor and forced labor. (8) Led by the Ministry of Public Union. (54)
Military, Civil, and Federal Police	The Military Police operate at the local level and refer cases to the Civil Police for investigation. The Federal Police, in turn, work on interstate or international cases and maintain a database to track cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. (8) The recently established Nucleus to Repress Forced Labor office works with the Federal Police's Service for the Repression of Trafficking in Persons and Human Smuggling (STRP) to respond to cases of human trafficking and forced labor. The STRP is led by a police delegate and supported by three federal police officers, along with additional staff support, depending on the specific mission with a focus on human trafficking and smuggling. (55,56)

* Agency responsible for child labor enforcement was restructured during the reporting period.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Brazil took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4,586,620 (11)	\$6,059,361 (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	2,015 (8)	1,971 (11)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (57)	Yes (11)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	37,806 (11)	59,588 (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1,671 (11)	2,317 (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	933 (55)	1,170 (11)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	123 (11)	406 (11)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (57)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (11)

In 2022, the Secretariat of Labor Inspection (SIT) conducted over 1,368 child labor specific operations resulting in the removal of 2,317 children from situations of child labor, including its worst forms. The number of operations and rescues were the highest recorded over the last 6 years. (11) According to SIT, when children are found in situations of child labor, including in hazardous working conditions, they are immediately removed from the situation and relevant data related to the violations are collected and forwarded to social services providers within the child and adolescent protection network, while reports are sent to the Public Ministry for further guidance. (51,58) In addition, children over age 14 may be referred to the country's apprenticeship program. (58)

However, research indicates that Brazil does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (59-61)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Brazil took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient efforts to hold violators of child labor laws accountable in accordance with the law.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (50)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (50)

In 2022, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP) prepared a Judicial Activity Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and Crimes, which was funded and led by the IOM, and in partnership with the Federal University of Minas Gerais, drafted a report titled "International Trafficking in Persons in Brazil: Crime in Motion, Justice on Hold." The report presents a diagnosis of how the Brazilian justice system addresses international human trafficking across its entire national territory. (50,62) In addition, the Judiciary, the Labor Prosecution Office (MPT), and the federal and state police have databases to track cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation; however, information from these databases is not shared in a standardized way across relevant agencies. (8,63) Furthermore, reports indicate that the judicial system does not sufficiently hold perpetrators accountable for child labor law violations, including forced child labor, which may lead to a sense of impunity among violators. (64)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor	Leads implementation of the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Working Adolescents. Re-established in December 2020 and restructured from its original multipartite composition to a tripartite structure made up of six government, six employer, and six employee representatives. (65) Government representatives include the Ministries of Economy, Education, Citizenship, Health, Agriculture and Supply, and Women, Family and Human Rights. In addition, six special representatives are allowed to participate in meetings as observers, including from government agencies and national and international organizations, though these special representatives are not allowed to vote on any new initiatives. (66) In 2022, established a Working Group focused on developing a national workflow among agencies to address child labor. (11)

During the reporting period, the MJSP, through its National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and in collaboration with the IOM, launched the Information System for Confronting Human Trafficking, which aims to generate data on the purposes and forms of recruitment, improve responses in addressing these crimes, and allow for detailed information on victims of human trafficking to be recorded. (50,67)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the efficacy of accomplishing mandates.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Working Adolescents III (2019–2022)	Prioritized the prevention and eradication of child labor and the protection of adolescent workers; raised public awareness of child labor and its worst forms, including the risks of child labor; ensured relevant legislative compliance related to the prohibitions of child labor and its worst forms; strengthened family security and stability through the increase of employment opportunities; ensured access to quality education; and established health support systems for child labor victims. (68) Its implementation was coordinated by the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CONANDA). (69) Research was unable to determine whether activities were taken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking III (2018–2022)	Outlined the government's strategy to address human trafficking. Included 58 objectives based on 6 themes: policy management, information management, training, accountability, victim assistance and prevention, and public awareness raising. (64,70) During the reporting period, the Plan was implemented through numerous human trafficking trainings, victim assistance and prevention, and awareness campaigns. (50)
Federal Pact for the Eradication of Forced Labor	Aims to establish a database on forced labor, create state-level commissions to address forced labor, and strengthen inter-agency coordination. Led by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security's (MJSP) Special Secretariat for Human Rights, and currently signed by 23 of the 27 states. (64,71,72) Research was unable to determine whether activities were taken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (73-75)

In 2022, the Rio de Janeiro city government launched a Municipal Plan to Combat the Sexual Exploitation of Children and adolescents. The Municipal Plan is aimed at improving existing policies focused on protecting and ensuring the rights of minors in the municipality, including through the increase of awareness campaigns to address and eradicate child labor; this is the first municipal plan of its kind to be implemented in Brazil. (76)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to assist child victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
National Program to Eradicate Child Labor (<i>Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil [PETI]</i>)†	Ministry of Citizenship (MOC) social assistance program that addresses child labor through awareness-raising activities, victim identification and protection, and conditional cash transfers. To receive program benefits, family participants must ensure that children are not working and maintain at least 85 percent school attendance. (77) In 2022, continued providing support to Brazilian states, and participated in all meetings of the National Commission to Combat Slave Labor and in the meetings of the National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor. (78)
Aid Brazil (<i>Auxílio Brasil</i>)†	MOC cash transfer program that integrates various public policies addressing social assistance, health, education, employment, and income. Aimed at families living in poverty and extreme poverty throughout the country. (79) Established in November 2021, the program replaces the pre-existing Family Stipend (<i>Bolsa Família</i>) program, increasing the amounts paid to vulnerable families and incorporating all families previously enrolled in the <i>Bolsa Família</i> program. (8) In 2022, the program reached unprecedented levels by extending assistance to over 21.5 million families due to an increase of \$13 million. (80)
National Flow of Assistance to Victims of Slave Labor†	Creates an integrated network of social services providers and standardizes assistance to victims of slave labor, including child victims, across the country. It is structured into three stages: complaint and planning, rescue and reintegration, and the identification of organizations mandated to act at each stage, including details of each organization's roles. (81) Led by the Ministry for Women, Family, and Human Rights. (82) Active in 2022. (11)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Brazil.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (83,85-89)

In 2022, the Secretary of State for Tourism in the state of Maranhão continued conducting its annual weeklong awareness campaign to Combat Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. Various activities were carried out in schools to raise awareness of these issues. (50) Campaigns were also conducted at tourist focused events. In addition, the state of Pernambuco's Public Ministry of Labor, in partnership with the State Secretariat of Urban Development and Housing, the Pernambuco International Transport Company, and the

Recife Transport Consortium, launched a campaign to raise awareness of child abuse and human trafficking. (50) Posters were distributed through 66 intercity transport terminals and plastered on 2,000 buses in the Metropolitan Region of Recife. (50) Moreover, the National Forum for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor launched the results of a study on the situation of child laborers in domestic service. According to the study, most of the identified cases were girls (85 percent), African descent (70.8 percent), and between the ages of 14 and 17 (94 percent). Activities performed were varied though the study determined that 48.6 percent of these children worked as child caregivers, 40.3 percent as domestic workers, and 5.3 percent as caretakers. (90)

Although there are social programs in place, reports indicate that states lack resources and expertise to adequately assist, identify, refer, and support child trafficking victims, and many also do not have specialized shelters for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. (31) In addition, because the National Program to Eradicate Child Labor (*Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil [PETI]*) is decentralized, municipal governments are responsible for implementation and monitoring, and must report back to state and federal governments. Challenges include responding to the needs of program participants, complex local contexts and geographic areas, excessive program requirements, and high staff turnover. (91)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Brazil (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws do not require the use of threats, violence, coercion, fraud, or abuse to establish the crime of child trafficking.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 16 to 17 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors from 1,971 to 7,000 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 105 million people.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information related to criminal law enforcement efforts, such as the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and whether penalties were imposed for child labor crimes.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that relevant enforcement agencies coordinate their efforts to collect data on cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and ensure that the data are disaggregated by victims' ages.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that all perpetrators of child labor crimes are held accountable in accordance with the law.	2015 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Working Adolescents III and the Federal Pact for the Eradication of Forced Labor and publish results from activities implemented by each plan during the reporting period.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Remove barriers to education, including by ensuring an adequate number of trained teachers, providing sufficient schools, improving school infrastructure, and taking steps to enroll children in rural areas.	2013 – 2022
	Support local governments in the implementation and monitoring of the National Program to Eradicate Child Labor.	2009 – 2022
	Provide adequate resources to state governments to ensure that child trafficking victims receive appropriate social services and ensure the availability of specialized shelters for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that the government publishes the results of National Forced Labor Survey.	2020 – 2022

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Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in the British Virgin Islands, in 2022, the government made no advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. There is no list of hazardous work prohibited for children in the British Virgin Islands, nor does the law criminalize the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, the minimum age for work of 16 years old is lower than the compulsory education age of 17 years old.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides one key indicator on children's education in the British Virgin Islands. (1)

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Primary Completion Rate (%)		114.5







Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

The Ministry of Education has employed truancy officers to ensure that children continue to attend school until the age of 17. (3) While education in the British Virgin Islands is free, the cost of uniforms, books, and lunches prevents some children from attending school. In addition, violence in schools can deter children from attending. (1,4) Children not in school may be vulnerable to engage in child labor.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

British Overseas Territories recognize the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the UK but are not constitutionally part of the UK. They are self-governing, except in the areas of foreign affairs and defense. (5) Domestic UK law does not generally apply unless explicitly extended to the British Virgin Islands. Under Article 35(4) of the ILO Constitution, when the UK ratifies a Convention, the Territory must consider if it will accept the Convention. If the Convention is accepted, it is considered applicable to that Territory. (5,6) The following Convention has been extended to and accepted by the British Virgin Islands (Table 2).

Table 2. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The Government of the British Virgin Islands has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 3). However, gaps exist in the British Virgin Islands' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to criminalize the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 3 and 128 of the Labor Code (7)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 3 and 130 of the Labor Code (7)

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Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 130 and 146 of the Labor Code (7)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 130 of the Labor Code; Article 14 of the Constitution Order; Section 201A of the Criminal Code (7-9)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 201A of the Criminal Code (9)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 127, 201A, and 284A of the Criminal Code; Article 130 of the Labor Code (7,9)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Articles 3 and 130 of the Criminal Code (9)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17	Section 2b of the Education Amendment Act of 2014; Part 2, Division 3, Section 28(1) of the Education Act (10,11)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 22 of the Constitution Order; Section 17 of the Education Act (8,10)

* Country has no conscription (5)

† Country has no standing military (12)

In the British Virgin Islands, there is no criminal prohibition against using children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, the laws prohibiting the commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards by not covering girls ages 16–17 or boys. (9) The Labor Code specifies that hazardous work be defined by the Minister of Labor, but the Minister of Labor has not defined hazardous work for children, including seafaring, or light work that may be engaged in by children who are at least age 14. (7,13) The minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (10,11)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the British Virgin Islands have established an institutional mechanism for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor	Enforces labor laws and collects data and statistics on violations of the Labor Code and plans and conducts labor inspections. (7,14,15)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in the British Virgin Islands (Table 5).

Table 5. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2020 – 2022
	Increase the minimum age of work from age 16 to age 17 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the commercial sexual exploitation of girls ages 16–17 and boys.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children by eliminating prohibitive school costs and violence in schools.	2018 – 2022

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In 2022, Burkina Faso made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. On September 12, 2022, the government adopted a handover protocol in collaboration with the United Nations, which considers child soldiers as victims and directs officials to transfer them to social services by security forces if detained following military operations. The government also developed a mobile application for labor inspectors that will provide real-time data and information on child labor throughout the country and translated its hazardous work list for children into five local languages. Lastly, the government adopted the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan on Eliminating Child and Forced Labor in the Cotton, Textile, and Garment Value Chains. However, children in Burkina Faso are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in farming and commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in artisanal gold mining. The Labor Code does not identify the light work activities in which children may engage. The government also lacked resources for the enforcement of child labor laws and did not release information on its labor and criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Burkina Faso. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

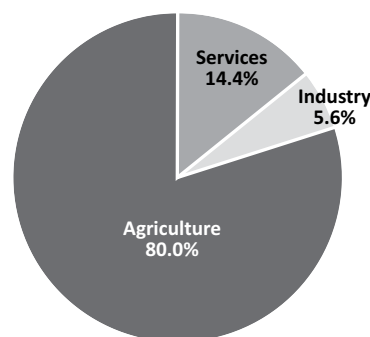
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	35.7 (849,922)
Attending School (%)	10 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		67.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Enquête Multisectorielle Continué (EMC), 2014. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Planting, weeding, and harvesting crops, including cotton (3-8) Raising and herding† livestock, including cattle and goats (8-10)
Industry	Artisanal mining† of gold, including digging† and crushing† rock, working underground,† carrying heavy loads,† and exposure to mercury† (3,8-11) Quarrying† and transporting heavy loads† while working to extract granite (10,12) Working in construction (8,11)
Services	Domestic work (3,8,11) Street work, including vending† (8,13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,14-16) Forced farming, including in the production of cotton and cocoa; livestock raising; domestic work; begging; gold mining; and quarrying (8,10,11,14,16)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced begging in Koranic schools (11,12,14)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (8,16)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children engage in artisanal gold mining, which is particularly arduous and often exposes children to dangerous chemicals such as cyanide and mercury, which are used in the gold extraction process. (5,10,15,17) Burkina Faso also is one of the largest producers of cotton in Africa, with a reported 250,000 children involved in growing the crop, primarily on small family farms. (4,7,12) Children working in the cotton sector are exposed to many health risks, including exposure to pesticides, injury from the use of sharp tools, animal bites, and respiratory issues. (4,10)




During the reporting period, children were used as soldiers by extremist armed groups. In addition, a *coup d’etat* in January 2022 and a subsequent military takeover in September 2022, as well as continued insecurity, has led to the mass displacement of more than 2 million IDPs in the last 3 years, including a large number of vulnerable children. (8,12,16,18) Child trafficking also occurs within Burkina Faso, and it is a destination, transit point, and source for child trafficking to and from other West African countries. (14,15,19)

Although the Law Orienting the Education System mandates free education until age 16, many children face barriers to educational access. (3,9,20,21) Due to a lack of infrastructure, some communities create makeshift structures to serve as schools, and in rural areas teacher shortages are common, especially for the post-primary levels. (8) In addition, there are fees for all levels of public education, which sometimes pose heavy burdens on families. (3,9) Moreover, school violence exists and is exacerbated by the current security crisis, and transportation costs restrict access to schooling in urban areas. (9) Children in Burkina Faso must have birth documentation (e.g., a birth certificate or supplemental birth judgment) to register for school. (9,22) A student may begin schooling without documentation; however documentation must be provided before the end of the first quarter following the child’s registration. (3,9) Because more than one in five children do not have a birth certificate, many children in Burkina Faso remain out of school and vulnerable to child labor. (8,9) While research has found no evidence of discrimination based on ethnicity, refugees and IDPs face many educational challenges, mainly due to the sudden increase in educational needs in the communities hosting them. Less than 20 percent of displaced people manage to obtain school registration. (8,9) In some localities where armed attacks on schools have intensified, especially in the East and Sahel regions, there is a preference of some communities for other types of education such as Koranic schools. (9) Ongoing insecurity in the country has resulted in more than 6,253 schools being closed, affecting more than 1 million children. (8)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Burkina Faso has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Burkina Faso's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including unspecified light work provisions.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 152 of the Labor Code; Order Deviating the Age of Admission to Employment (23,24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 149 and 150 of the Labor Code; Article 1 of the Hazardous Work List (23,25)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 153 of the Labor Code; Articles 3–6 of the Hazardous Work List; Article 77 of the Mining Code (23,25,26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 5 and 153 of the Labor Code; Articles 3–5 of the Law Suppressing the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; Article 1-4 of the Law on Combating Trafficking of Persons and Similar Practices (23,27,28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 153 of the Labor Code; Articles 1–5, 14, and 15 of the Law on Combating Trafficking of Persons and Similar Practices (23,28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 153 of the Labor Code; Articles 3, 4, 7–10, and 20 of the Law Suppressing the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (23,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 153 of the Labor Code (23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	20	Article 2 of the Decree Organizing Operations Related to Convoking the Contingent (29)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 153 and 424 of the Labor Code (23)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 4 of the Law Orienting the Education System (21)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 6 of the Law Orienting the Education System (21)

* Country has no conscription (30)

The light work provisions in the Labor Code are not sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor because activities that qualify as light work that may be permitted are not identified in the legislation. (23,24)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Social Security (MFPTSS)	Enforces labor laws as the lead agency on child labor law enforcement and establishes a government policy to address child labor. (31) In 2022, MFPTSS organized a training workshop on child labor for journalists and communicators to increase their understanding of the laws and regulations against child labor and child trafficking, and to facilitate the implementation of the National Strategy to End the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (16) The Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization, and Interior Security (MATDSI) assists MFPTSS by participating in joint routine inspections for suspected child trafficking cases. (10,32)
Ministry of Women, National Solidarity, Family, and Humanitarian Action (MFSNF)	Removes children from exploitative child labor; provides reintegration services through its mobile unit for intervention, and works with local village surveillance committees on awareness-raising efforts through participation in joint routine inspections with MFPTSS. (10,32) Operates a free hotline to report child abuse and maintains civil registry offices in maternity wards to register newborn babies. Enlists its National Council for Childhood to oversee all policies aimed at the survival, protection, development, and participation of children in broader policy initiatives. (33) It is unknown how many cases of child labor were identified as a result of complaints made to the MFSNF hotline.
Ministry of Justice	Appoints one or more judges who specialize in child protection issues to each high court to oversee juvenile court cases. Collaborates with MFSNF social workers in charge of child protection to conduct investigations on behalf of vulnerable children, including victims of child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, exploitative child labor, and begging. (10,34) Receives criminal cases involving children and women referred from MATDSI's Morals Brigade in the MATDSI National Police Force. (10,32)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Burkina Faso took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Social Security (MFPTSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	\$225,000 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	159 (3)	180 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (8)

In 2022, the MFPTSS created a mobile application for labor inspectors as a tool for reporting and monitoring their work that also will provide real-time data and information on child labor throughout the country. (8) In particular, the application will help inspectors determine the dangers that children are exposed to, include information about appropriate social services, and help verify that children have been removed from work sites. (8) During the reporting period, the government also reported its labor inspectorate budget for the first time since 2018. (8) However, research indicates that Burkina Faso does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (35) Furthermore, the labor inspectorate lacks adequate resources to enforce labor laws throughout the country, including the financial resources needed to carry out a sufficient number of preliminary labor inspections and follow-up inspections. (19,36)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Burkina Faso took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inconsistent application of victim identification and referral procedures by authorities and frontline responders.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (3)	Yes (8)

On September 12, 2022, the government adopted a handover protocol in collaboration with the UN that considers child soldiers as victims, and directs officials to transfer children to social services by security forces if detained following military operations. (8,12,16) The authorities have begun implementing the protocol and have transferred 149 children to social services. However, the protocol did not apply to children previously detained, leaving at least 15 minors, including potential human trafficking victims, in detention for alleged association with violent extremist groups. (12) They were held in a high-security prison separately from adult detainees and international organizations and NGOs were allowed access to provide specialized care, including legal services. However, research suggests that there are isolated cases of children being detained by the government in connection with terrorism charges and held in prisons along with adults, with some children being held for years. (8,12,37) In addition, although the government has standard victim identification and referral procedures, criminal law enforcement authorities and frontline responders do not apply them uniformly. (15,19)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including insufficient coordination among ministries.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Coordination Committee for the National Strategy Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (CNC-SN/PFTE)	Defines appropriate strategies for mobilizing the resources necessary to implement SN/PFTE. Created in July 2020 by order of the Minister of Labor, comprises representatives from other ministries, civil society organizations, NGOs, unions, and employers. (3,8,9) The decree determining the list of dangerous work prohibited for children has been translated into five local languages, including Moore, Dioula, Fulfulde, Gourmanché, and Dagara. (8) MFPTSS serves as the Secretariat for CNC/SN/PFTE. (38) Promotes consultation and synergy of action among the actors involved in SN/PFTE implementation. Validates the annual activity programs of SN/PFTE. (9) Monitors and evaluates implementation and proposes necessary readjustments. Reviews and adopts the reports submitted to it by the Technical Secretariat. (9) Issues reasoned opinions on any question related to the worst forms of child labor. (9) The Committee held its first meeting in October 2022, where it reviewed and finalized the 2021 implementation report of SN-PFTE, and provided training to its members, as well as a training to approximately 50 teachers on child labor issues. (8)

Poor coordination among the various ministries responsible for addressing child labor and a lack of funding and resources, including computers and electricity, continue to hamper the government's ability to coordinate efforts to fully address child trafficking. (3,17,36)

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V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of policies related to child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Strategy to End the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2019–2023) (SN/PFTE)	Aims to monitor, address, prevent, and protect against the worst forms of child labor in Burkina Faso, and reintegrate victims. (3,14) Developed by law enforcement agencies focused on child labor and its worst forms; governmental and non-governmental bodies; technical, financial, and social partners; and civil society organizations, including children's associations. (9) During the reporting period, the government continued to implement SN/PFTE, including by the completion of the data collection process for the national survey on child labor, the digitalization of child labor inspections through the development of a mobile application, the translation into local languages of the decree fixing the lists of dangerous work prohibited for children, and the drafting of the decree enumerating the list of light work authorized for children. (8,16)
National Child Protection Strategy (2020–2023)	Aims to strengthen the institutional, community, and family environment to ensure effective protection for children. (22) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Child Protection Strategy during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the MFPTSS adopted the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan on Eliminating Child and Forced Labor in the Cotton, Textile, and Garment Value Chains under the CLEAR Cotton project co-funded by the ILO and EU. (12,16)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Campaign to Remove Street Children	NGO MinWomen-funded program, with coordination by MFSNF. Includes outreach missions in the streets to identify and refer vulnerable children, including victims of forced begging, and reintegrate them back into society or to one of the four youth shelters established in the Somgandé, Baskuy, Nongremassom, and Cissin districts of Ouagadougou. (19,36) During the reporting period, MFSNF continued to implement campaigns to remove children from streets, including an operation launched by the Minister of MFSNF to relocate children from the streets of Ouagadougou. (12)
MFSNF Projects to Combat Human Trafficking†	Aim to address human trafficking. Includes the operation of transit centers that provide food, medical assistance, and counseling to child trafficking survivors and children vulnerable to human trafficking. (15) Transit centers aim to reintegrate victims into their communities and facilitate the repatriation of foreign victims when possible. (15) The National Parenting Program assists parents in providing access to education and raising awareness about child trafficking. Nationwide media campaigns to address human trafficking provide advocacy, raise awareness, and build capacity for key actors involved in child protection issues, including child trafficking. (15) Watchdog and monitoring committees ensure that all cases of alleged trafficking of children are reported to the justice system by social workers. (39) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the MFSNF Projects to Combat Human Trafficking during the reporting period.
ILO-Implemented Projects to Combat Child Labor	Project to address child labor and forced labor in supply chains, implemented by the ILO in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization. Includes Eliminating Child Labor and Forced Labor in the Cotton, Textile and Garment Value Chains: An Integrated Approach (2018–2022), a 9.70 million (EUR 9 million) EU and ILO initiative of the UN-funded global project to combat child labor and forced labor in cotton and textile supply chains. (40) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement ILO projects to Combat Child Labor during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Burkina Faso.

Although Burkina Faso has social programs to address the worst forms of child labor in cotton production and gold mining, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. (15)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Burkina Faso (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws determine the light work activities in which children are permitted to engage.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 180 to 209 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 8.4 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that labor law enforcement receives sufficient human and financial resources to fulfill its mandates, including conducting an adequate number of inspections, and following up after preliminary inspections to ensure the remediation of notices to comply with labor law obligations.	2009 – 2022
	Publish statistics on labor law enforcement efforts, including the labor inspectorate's funding, number of labor inspectors employed, number and type of labor inspections conducted, number of child labor violations found, number of penalties imposed and collected, number of inspections conducted at worksites, number of targeted and routine inspections, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2009 – 2022
	Establish and publish data on a mechanism to log all calls to the government child protection hotline and to track cases of child labor for referral to law enforcement or social services providers.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement authorities and frontline responders apply standard victim identification and referral procedures uniformly.	2016 – 2022
	Publish statistics on criminal law enforcement efforts, including training for criminal investigators, number of investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, number of convictions, and penalties imposed.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that a reciprocal referral mechanism exists between criminal authorities and social services and is operational.	2019 – 2022
	Take active measures, including ensuring that a mechanism is operational, to ensure that children are not inappropriately incarcerated, detained with adults, penalized, or physically harmed solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of their subjection to the worst forms of child labor, such as child soldiering.	2020 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that coordinating bodies receive adequate resources, such as computers and electricity, to accomplish their mandates.	2015 – 2022
	Enhance coordination and collaborative processes and procedures among ministries, law enforcement, and social services.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor, including the National Child Protection Strategy, and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2022
	Establish a social program to ensure that IDP and other vulnerable children have access to education and thus reduce their risk of exposure to the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Improve access to education by eliminating school-related fees and other costs, such as uniforms, by increasing the number of schools and teachers in rural areas, ensuring access to affordable transportation, and ending violence in schools.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that children are registered at birth and that IDPs have access to the requisite documentation to gain access to social services, including education.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2020 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to fully address child labor in cotton production and gold mining.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Burma is receiving an assessment of no advancement. Despite initiatives to address child labor, Burma is assessed as having made no advancement because it demonstrated complicity in the use of forced child labor. During the reporting period, the regime’s military continued to force civilians, including children, to work in non-combat roles as porters, cleaners, cooks, and agricultural laborers in conflict areas. Otherwise, the government made efforts by enacting the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons Law, which establishes that a child trafficking offense does not require a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion. Children in Burma are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict by armed groups, and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The vulnerability of Rohingya children to the worst forms of child labor remained high as many continued to be denied access to education and livelihoods because of restrictions on their movements imposed by the regime. The regime also has not published a hazardous work list of activities prohibited for children, as required by the Child Rights Law. In addition, the regime did not publish information on its labor or criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Burma.

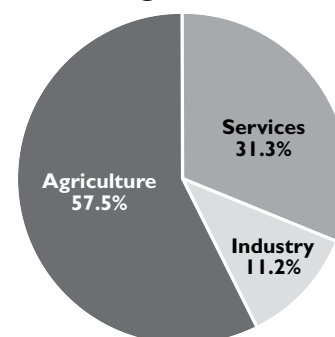
Table I. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	0.4 (39,370)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	0.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		95.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2019. (2)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including rubber, sugarcane, beans and pulses, rice, betel nut, and bamboo (2,3-7)
	Fishing and processing fish and seafood (2-3,5,6,9)
	Forestry, including on teak plantations (2,9-11)
Industry	Producing garments (7,12)
	Construction and carrying stones (2,4,8)
	Quarrying and mining, including for jade and rubies (2,4,10,13,14)
Services	Domestic work (2,6,8,15)
	Working in teashops and restaurants, including waiting tables and washing dishes (2,6,8)
	Vending, including in fish markets, collecting garbage and recyclables, and working in transportation (5,8,10,16)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced recruitment of children by state and non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (8,6,17,18)
	Forced labor in agriculture, including harvesting bamboo and producing beans, rice, rubber, sugarcane, and teak (4,8,11)
	Forced labor in manufacturing bricks and construction (8)
	Forced labor in domestic work, teashops, and begging (6,10,13,15)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,8)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In 2022, the national military's continued self-reliance policy, which requires military forces to provide their own food and labor from local communities, led some units to force children and other civilians to work in non-combat roles, including portering, cooking, camp maintenance, farming, and other activities. (19,20) Border guard and non-state armed forces have also recruited and used children in armed conflict during the reporting period. (3,8) In addition, civilian brokers with military connections sometimes altered birthdates on identity documents to facilitate the entry of underage recruits into the military, and some children of military personnel have been forced to receive military training. (4,13,21,22)

Since the military perpetuated widespread ethnic cleansing of Rohingya people in northern Rakhine State in August 2017, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya, including over 495,000 children, have fled from Burma to Bangladesh, making them vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (6,23-25) Rohingya children residing in camps for refugees and IDP are at an increased risk of the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor and sex trafficking, due to lack of schools, movement restrictions, discriminatory policies and practices, and school closures as a consequence of ongoing violence, especially in Muslim villages. (6,8,26-29) The regime tightened movement restrictions on the Rohingya population, leading to the arrests of 2,000 people, including children, during the reporting period. (20,30) Children, particularly girls, are leaving these camps to immigrate to countries such as Malaysia for marriages, but often find themselves in situations of forced labor, including domestic work—a sector for which the regime has yet to pass a child labor law. (15,27,31-33)




School attendance is dramatically lower post-COVID-19 pandemic and after the February 1, 2021, coup. Exact percentages are unknown, as many parents refuse to enroll their children in regime-controlled schools, and many teachers joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and refuse to teach in schools controlled by the regime. (8) Moreover, schools throughout the country are regularly attacked by the military regime and non-state armed groups, particularly in the Sagaing region and Shan and Kachin States. Attacks on schools rose dramatically during the reporting period, often resulting in the death or injury of children. (8,19,34-36) Regime forces also continued to occupy schools, further disrupting education and exposing children and teachers to violence. (19,22) In addition, reports show that personnel in the military regime have killed teachers in non-regime-controlled areas for establishing community schools for children. (34,35) Other barriers to education in the country include costs associated with travel to schools located long distances away, a lack of schools and teachers, and expenses that include uniforms, books, transportation, and extra fees charged by teachers and schools. These barriers often lead children to discontinue their studies after primary school, increasing their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (8,24) Refugee children and children from ethnic communities who speak different languages also face barriers to education because ethnic languages are prohibited from being spoken in schools and the curriculum is only taught in Burmese. (8,24,37) Moreover, Burmese law guarantees education only for Burmese citizens, and Rohingya are often denied nationality identity cards due to discriminatory regime policies. (6,8,18,28,38)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Burma has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The regime has laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Burma's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of comprehensive hazardous work prohibitions.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Chapter XIV, Section 48(b) of the Child Rights Law; Section 75 of the Factories Act; Article 14 of the Shops and Establishments Law (39-41)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Chapter 1, Sections 3(b) and 3(t)(4), Chapter XIV, Section 48(a), and Chapter XXVII, Section 103(a)(3) of the Child Rights Law (41)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Sections 25 and 29 of the Factories Act; Article 14(d) of the Shops and Establishments Law; Rule 146 of the 2018 Mining Rules (39,40,42)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Chapter 1, Section 3(t) and Chapter XXVII, Sections 103(a)(2) and 106 of the Child Rights Law; Sections 3 and 25 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law; Sections 370, 371, and 374 of the Penal Code; Section 27(a) of the Ward or Village Tracts Administrative Law (41,43-45)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Chapter 1, Section 3(s)–(t) and Chapters XVII, Sections 103 and 106, and XVIII, Section 66 of the Child Rights Law; Sections 3, 25, 26, and 35 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law; Sections 372 and 366(a) of the Penal Code (41,43,45)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Chapter 1, Section 3(t)(2), Chapter XVIII, Section 66, and Chapter XXVII, Section 105(b) of the Child Rights Law; Sections 372 and 373 of the Penal Code (41,43)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Chapter 1, Section 3(t)(3) and Chapter XIV, Section 48(a) of the Child Rights Law; Sections 20(a) and 22(c) of the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Law (41,46)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Chapter XVII, Section 63(a–b) of the Child Rights Law; Part I of People's Military Service Law; 1974 Regulation for Persons Subject to the Defense Services Act (War Office Council Instruction 13/73) (41,47-49)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Chapter XVII, Section 63(a) of the Child Rights Law (41)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Chapter XVII, Section 64(a–b) and Chapter XXVII, Section 104(b) of the Child Rights Law (41)
Compulsory Education Age	No	10‡	Chapter XIV, Section 48(b) of the Child Rights Law; Section 4(j) of the National Education Law (41,50)
Free Public Education	Yes		Chapter XIII, Section 46(b) of the Child Rights Law; Articles 14(a) and 16(a) of the National Education Law (41,50)

* Country has an inactive military conscription (51)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (37,52)

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In 2022, the regime enacted the updated Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons Law, which removed the requirement to demonstrate force, fraud, or coercion to prosecute child trafficking cases. (8,45) The regime also enacted the Organization Registration Law, which reportedly will constrain operations for both domestic and international NGOs. It is unclear whether this law will also hinder their ability to provide services to exploited children. (20,35,53,54)

Although Burmese law prohibits persons under the age of 18 from joining the armed forces, the regime did not take action to enforce this during the reporting period. (8) In addition, Burma has higher penalties for perpetrators who use children in the production or trafficking of drugs; however, the law defines children as those under age 16, while international standards regarding illicit activities define children as those below the age of 18. (9,46) Moreover, although Burma's Child Rights Law mandates the creation of a hazardous work list, Burma has not published a hazardous work list. (8) Additionally, school is only required for children through age 10; however, the minimum age for work is age 14. (37,50) This does not meet international standards because the compulsory schooling age does not meet the minimum age for work of 14.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The regime has institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor — Factories and General Labor Laws Inspection Department (FGLLID)	Inspects factories, shops, and establishments for child labor law violations. (39,40) Only mandated to inspect for child labor in manufacturing establishments and factories as laid out in the Factories Law (1951) and the Shops and Establishment Law (2016). (8) Certain sectors in which child labor is reported to occur—including agriculture, construction, mining, and fishing—are outside of the purview of FGLLID and are, therefore, not subject to inspections. (8)
Ministry of Home Affairs – Myanmar Police Force, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division (ATIPD)	Investigates human trafficking crimes and engages in prevention efforts through its 32 regional Anti-Trafficking Task Force police units. (7,8) Also oversees three specialized Child Protection Units in Rangoon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Daw to address child exploitation cases, including child trafficking, and uses formal written procedures to screen victims. (7) ATIPD operates nine 24/7 hotlines for reporting human trafficking cases. (6) In 2022, ATIPD reported four trafficking cases involving six children. The current status of these cases is unknown. (7)
Ministry of Legal Affairs	Previously named the Union Attorney General's Office. (3) Responsible for prosecuting human trafficking crimes. Coordinators act as district-level human trafficking focal points, helping to build prosecutorial expertise, collect and report data, support coordination between prosecutors and police, create focused training opportunities, and improve prosecution records related to human trafficking throughout the country. (8) The Ministry of Legal Affairs did not publish comprehensive data on human trafficking prosecutions in 2022. (7,8)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Burma took actions to address child labor.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (39,40)	Yes (39,40)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (3)	No (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (39,40)	Yes (39,40)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Unknown (7,8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Unknown (6,8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)

Due to widespread armed conflict in Burma following the 2021 military coup, the military regime was unable to enforce child labor laws in approximately half of the country. (8) Many labor inspectors left their jobs to join the pro-democracy movement after the coup, which, in addition to pandemic and conflict-related travel restrictions, limited the Ministry of Labor's ability to carry out inspections. (3,11) Reports also indicate that training for labor inspectors is insufficient, and there is a lack of funding to cover transportation and equipment for labor inspections. (10,55) When labor inspections do occur, they are generally limited to Burma's major urban centers, leaving children in remote rural areas unprotected. (55,56) In addition, previous reports indicated that factory owners are often told in advance when an inspection will occur, and labor inspectors often neglect to speak with workers. (10,55) Research indicates that Burma does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,8,55,57,58)

On the rare occasion that penalties are imposed for labor violations, they are often too low to act as a disincentive for most medium to large enterprises. (8) Moreover, although the 2019 Child Rights Law specifies that the Department of Social Welfare within the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) is the official body responsible for the care of child labor victims, regulations regarding implementation of the law are pending, and research was unable to determine whether this agency received referrals from labor inspectors during the reporting period. (8) Further, it is unclear whether the National Complaints Mechanism for Forced Labor, which was established by the previous government, is functioning. (6,20)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Burma took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	5 (3)	4 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	5 (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)

In 2022, community-based human trafficking identification teams received training on screening and interviewing human trafficking victims in accordance with the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Law. MSWRR also provided representatives from various regime departments with training on standard operating procedures for human trafficking crimes. (8) Although the regime reported that it prosecuted four child trafficking cases during the reporting period, information about the nature of these cases is unavailable. (8) Research also indicates that nearly 7,000 police officers have left the Myanmar Police Force since the coup in 2021, which has resulted in regions throughout the country lacking sufficient enforcement coverage. (4,31,34,59)

While the national military has previously taken action against military officials for crimes related to the recruitment of children, most of these cases reportedly culminated in reprimands, demotions, relocations,

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fines, or decreases in pensions—penalties significantly less than the prison sentences that are prescribed by law. (4,9,10,21,60) The regime did not make information public regarding the investigation, prosecution, or sentencing of military officials related to the military recruitment of children during the reporting period. (8) In more than isolated instances, children associated with non-state armed groups have been detained and arrested, rather than being referred to appropriate victim support services. In addition, some children have been detained in a military interrogation center for periods ranging from 2 days to several weeks. (19,34)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coordination across government agencies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee on Child Labor Eradication	Oversees the implementation of the Myanmar Child Labor Eradication Project. (8) Chaired by the Vice Chairman of State Administration Council and includes 39 members, including representatives from 13 government ministries, the chief ministers of 10 states, the mayors of Rangoon and Mandalay, unions, and employer and civil society organizations. (8) Although this committee held its fifth coordination meeting in October 2022, the specific activities carried out by this committee during the reporting year are unknown. (7,8)

The regime's Committee on Prevention of Recruitment of Child Soldiers is the designated interagency coordination body to address child soldier issues and is the only agency within the regime that works with the UN Country Taskforce on Monitoring and Reporting. (8) There are reports that this committee had an overwhelming backlog of child soldier cases in 2022. (8,19) In addition, research indicates that since the 2021 coup, the regime continues to be hampered by limited interministerial coordination to address child labor issues. (13,20)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The regime has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of policies that address all relevant worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Myanmar National Action Plan on Elimination of Child Labor (2019–2023)	Established in partnership with the ILO. Aims to eliminate child labor, including hazardous child labor. (61) Research was unable to determine whether the regime conducted any activities to implement the plan during the reporting period. (8)
Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018–2030)	Sets out a strategy to expand social protection services, including the introduction of measures to keep children enrolled in schools and out of child labor. (62) In particular, Action Plan Item 4.3.6 specifically addresses eliminating child labor by preventing school dropouts. (10,62) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period. (8)
5-Year National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2022–2027) †	Aims to eliminate internal and cross-border trafficking in persons and to prevent new forms of trafficking. Implemented by the Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons. (8) The regime did not consult with the Human Trafficking Working Group in the development of the plan, departing from the practices of the former government. (8) The regime also has not published this plan, and as a result, research was unable to determine its contents, scope, and objectives. Moreover, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period. (7,8)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Although Burma has adopted the 5-Year National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, research found no evidence of a policy specific to other worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor or commercial sexual exploitation of children. (8)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the regime funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Hotlines	UNICEF and World Vision-operated hotlines for reporting suspected cases of child recruitment or use of children by Burma's military, which remain active. (63) World Vision reported receiving 11 calls from the hotline in 2022, 8 of which were referred as suspected cases of the recruitment of minors. (8) Specific actions taken by the government to support the hotlines were not specified during the reporting period. (8)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

The primary challenges to addressing child labor and forced labor issues include lack of resources and personnel, lack of understanding of victim integration, and decentralization of responsibility to state and regional authorities. (20,21,55,64) As a result, the responsibility for protecting, rehabilitating, and reintegrating victims of forced child labor largely falls on civil society organizations and international NGOs. The government also lacks sufficient social programs to adequately address all worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (8)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Burma (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children as required by the Child Rights Law.	2019 – 2022
	Provide criminal penalties for the use, procuring, and offering of children under age 18 for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2016 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for compulsory education from age 10 to age 14 so it is consistent with the minimum age for admission to work.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Provide adequate funding and equipment to the labor inspectorate.	2019 – 2022
	Employ at least 565 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 22.6 million people.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspections occur outside of the main urban centers and in all sectors in which child labor is known to occur, including agriculture, mining, construction, and fishing.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators receive sufficient training on child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that prior notice of unannounced inspections is not given to factory owners and that inspectors interview workers when conducting labor inspections.	2019 – 2022
	Publish data related to labor law enforcement, including funding for the labor inspectorate, number of labor inspectors, whether training was provided for new and existing labor inspectors, number of labor inspections conducted, number of child labor violations found, whether routine and unannounced inspections were conducted, and whether a complaint mechanism and reciprocal referral mechanism exist.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors refer survivors of child labor to the Department of Social Welfare for social services.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that penalties for labor law violations are severe enough to deter violations.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Complaints Mechanism for Forced Labor is adequately funded and staffed to receive complaints related to forced labor.	2020 – 2022
Publish data related to criminal law enforcement, including the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and penalties imposed related to child labor, as well as information on training for criminal investigators and whether a reciprocal referral mechanism exists between criminal authorities and social services providers.	2016 – 2022	

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Cease the practice of arresting and detaining victims of the worst forms of child labor and ensure that they are referred to the appropriate social services.	2022
	Improve oversight of military policy and monitoring of recruitment procedures to prevent the recruitment of children as front-line combatants by the national military and non-state armed groups in conflict areas.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the Myanmar Police Force has sufficient resources, specifically an adequate number of police officers and supporting personnel, to investigate alleged child labor crimes, including in rural areas.	2022
	Ensure that penalties imposed for the recruitment and use of children in the military are commensurate with the seriousness of these crimes.	2017 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure frequent and regular coordination, including communication, across all government ministries related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Committee on Child Labor Eradication is active and able to carry out its intended mandate.	2020 – 2022
	Remedy the backlog of child soldier cases in the Committee on Prevention of Recruitment of Child Soldiers.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement all child labor policies, including the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, the Five-Year National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and the Myanmar National Action Plan on Elimination of Child Labor (2019–2023), and publish results from activities implemented on an annual basis.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Remove restrictions and barriers to education access for Rohingya children, such as citizenship requirements for them to attend school.	2017 – 2022
	Develop and implement education programs that reduce physical barriers for children who live long distances from schools, eliminate prohibitive expenses for attending school, and accommodate children who face language barriers, including those from ethnic communities.	2016 – 2022
	Develop and implement a program that ensures the safe return of Rohingya refugees, including children, to Rakhine State.	2018 – 2022
	Develop and implement programs to address all worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2016 – 2022
	Make efforts to prevent schools from being attacked by withdrawing military regime personnel and members of non-state armed groups from occupied schools.	2022
	Ensure that the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has sufficient resources and personnel to provide services to victims of the worst forms of child labor, including reintegration support at the Department of Rehabilitation.	2016 – 2022

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In 2022, Burundi made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Burundian government significantly increased funding for labor inspections, a fourteen-fold increase from 2021. The government, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund, also developed a national strategy to increase the integration of Batwa children into schools. Furthermore, members of Burundi's newly formalized Consultation and Monitoring Commission on Prevention and Repression of Trafficking in Persons completed a draft of a new national action plan on human trafficking, pending approval from authorities and final adoption by the Office of the Prime Minister. However, children in Burundi are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in gold mining. Burundi's laws do not establish a compulsory education age.

And while Burundi has a policy-based compulsory education age of 15, this is lower than its minimum age for work, 16, leaving children vulnerable to labor exploitation. The government also failed to provide comprehensive criminal law enforcement data related to the worst forms of child labor and lacked resources to conduct labor inspections and criminal investigations. Lastly, Burundi has insufficient social programs to address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Burundi. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	33.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	69.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	30.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		53.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2016–2017. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of coffee, sugarcane, cotton, palm oil, peat, and rice (3-9)
	Fishing, including managing heavy fishing nets and preparing meals for fishermen (3,4,6-11)
	Herding and feeding livestock (3-5,9)
	Forestry, including the production, packing, loading, and unloading of charcoal (7,8)
Industry	Extracting,† washing, and transporting minerals in mines and quarries, including artisanal gold mines (3,4,9)
	Making and transporting bricks (7,8)
	Manufacturing, including soldering, welding, processing plastics and metals, and helping in garages and workshops (6-8)
	Producing, packing, loading, and unloading charcoal (7)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work (4-6,12,13)
	Street vending, including selling food (3,4,12)
	Begging (4-6,8,14,15)
	Working in hotels and restaurants, including cooking, dishwashing, and waiting tables (3,4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,11,16)
	Forced domestic work (4,11,16)
	Forced labor in agriculture, mining, charcoal production, construction, fishing, street vending, and begging (3-5,8,11,16)
	Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of marijuana (8,17)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Burundi is a source country for children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking abroad, and children from rural areas are subjected to human trafficking within the country for domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. (8,16,18) Reports indicate that an increasing number of children from the Batwa ethnic group are being transported from rural areas into Bujumbura with promises of work and subsequently are exploited. (4) Women who offer room and board to children also sometimes force the children into commercial sexual exploitation to pay expenses. (11) In addition, Burundian girls are taken abroad for commercial sexual exploitation in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and countries in the Middle East. (5,11,16,19,20) Reporting suggests that Burundian children are exploited in Tanzania in forced labor. A civil society organization reported that 509 Burundian child trafficking victims returned to Burundi from Tanzania during the reporting period. (8)




Children work entire days transplanting rice, and typically drop out of school in the pre-harvest season to guard rice plantations from birds. Children are also utilized as lookouts in the forestry industry to report illegal woodcutting or theft, placing them in potentially dangerous situations when smugglers and thieves are present. (6,8,21) In fishing communities near Lake Tanganyika, boys are often engaged in fishing activities without pay while girls work as cooks or domestic employees and are at risk of sexual exploitation. (6,8,11) Civil society organizations indicate that up to 15 percent of children who are school dropouts in urban centers work in the charcoal trade, either packing, loading, and unpacking charcoal or working in fire pits. (6,8) Street children in Burundi may be particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including forced begging. (8,22)

While the government abolished primary school fees in 2012, there is no law that guarantees free public education and families are frequently asked to pay for supplies, secondary school fees, and school building maintenance costs, which has prevented many children from accessing public schooling. (4,7,8,23) Inadequate teacher capacity and poor infrastructure have also limited educational opportunity. For example, the lack of gender-separated bathrooms can contribute to a lower attendance rate among girls. (4,7,8) Children with disabilities and mobility issues face discrimination in schools, along with a lack of appropriate materials and infrastructure, limiting access to education. (24) In addition, refugee children from neighboring countries living in camps in Burundi face barriers to learning due to deteriorating school infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of educators. (8) Moreover, because birth certificates are required to attend school, many unregistered children, in particular children of the Batwa ethnic group and Burundian refugee children repatriating from abroad, remain out of school and vulnerable to child labor. (4,7,8,22,25)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Burundi has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Burundi's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of sufficient prohibitions against the use of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 2, 10, and 618 of the Labor Code (26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 270, 279, and 618 of the Labor Code; Article 13 of the Ministerial Ordinance to Regulate Child Labor (26,27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 9–15 of the Ministerial Ordinance to Regulate Child Labor (27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 4–6, 10, and 18–20 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 7 and 617 of the Labor Code (26,28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 12 of the Labor Code; Articles 4–6, 10, and 18–20 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 197, 246, and 255 of the Penal Code (26,28,29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 12 of the Labor Code; Articles 542–544 and 546 of the Penal Code; Articles 4, 10, and 18–20 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (26,28,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 505–511, 541, and 545 of the Penal Code (29)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 2 and 6(c) of the National Defense Troops Law (30)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 12 of the Labor Code; Articles 200.6, 200.2.27, 200.5.7, and 202 of the Penal Code (26,29)
Compulsory Education Age	No	15‡	Article 35 of the Law on Basic and Secondary Education (31)
Free Public Education	No		Article 53 of the Constitution; Articles 17, 35, and 47 of the Law on Basic and Secondary Education (31,32)

* Country has no conscription (30)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (31)

In 2022, the government drafted a new Child Protection Code, which has not yet been ratified, to provide more effective protections for children. (8,23) Although the Constitution prohibits the use of children in armed conflict, the Penal Code criminalizes only the use of children under age 15 in armed conflict, leaving children between the ages of 15 and 18 vulnerable to this worst form of child labor. (29,33) Burundian law does prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by state armed forces, and available evidence indicates that the government continued to comply with this provision. (3,34) Although it does not appear that there are any laws that establish

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compulsory education, there is a policy that provides for compulsory education to age 15. (35,36) However, even the policy-based compulsory education age is lower than the minimum age for work, leaving children between the ages of 15 and 16 vulnerable to labor exploitation. (26,37) The Law on Basic and Secondary Education states that free education will be guaranteed as established by decree, but research was unable to locate the relevant decree. (8,23,31) Moreover, the Law on Basic and Secondary Education calls on parents to finance education, which suggests that educational officials or schools would be permitted to levy fees. (31)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Employment	Administers and enforces all labor laws, including those on child labor, through the Inspector General of Work and Social Security. (38)
Ministry of Interior, Community Development, and Public Security	Conducts criminal investigations on the worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor, child trafficking, and the use of children in illicit activities. Through the Burundi National Police's Unit for the Protection of Minors and Morals, protects children from commercial sexual exploitation, illicit activity, forced labor, and military recruitment. (3-5,16,34)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes cases of the worst forms of child labor through its General Prosecutor's Office. (3-5)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Burundi took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Employment that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2,589 (7)	\$38,510 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	40 (7)	40 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (7)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (7)	1,000 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (7)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (7)	N/A (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (7)	N/A (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (7)	Unknown (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (7)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (8)

In 2022, 20 labor inspectors were trained on the labor code and social protection issues. (9) The government also significantly increased the budget for labor inspections during the reporting period, and the additional funding helped cover some travel expenses for inspectors, per diems for inspection visits, awareness campaigns on companies' social obligations, and ongoing development of the national health and safety policy. (8) However, a lack of sufficient resources for travel, fuel, and computer equipment continued to hamper the enforcement of child labor laws. (5,8,39) Reporting also suggests that inspections are conducted exclusively in the formal and semi-formal sectors, including in large-scale enterprises, in which child labor is relatively rare. As such, inspections are not conducted in the informal sector, including in informal agricultural labor, where child labor

is much more prevalent. (4,7,8,40,41) In addition, research indicates that Burundi does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their duties. (8,42,43)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Burundi took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (7)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (7)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (7)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (7)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (7)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (8)

During the reporting period, 30 magistrates and judicial police officers and 90 police officers from the General Commissariat for Migration received training from IOM on trafficking in persons. (9) The government also operates multiple hotlines that assist in the identification of child trafficking cases, including one specifically to report child abuse managed by the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights and Gender. (44) In 2022, the government continued to implement measures to prevent international child trafficking, including increased patrols of communes bordering neighboring countries and inspection of vehicles leaving Bujumbura for international travel. (45) In September 2022, Burundian police identified 20 children believed to be on their way to Tanzania to engage in child labor, including forced labor. The Burundian National Police and local authorities took the children into protective custody, provided them with assistance, and returned them to their families. (44)

The government lacked resources to fully implement criminal law enforcement strategies. For example, while the Burundi National Police Unit for the Protection of Minors and Morals was responsible for investigating trafficking in persons, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and child labor issues, it lacked capacity and often did not receive referrals from other police units. (19) Reporting indicates that investigators lack sufficient office spaces and supplies, transportation, fuel, and computer equipment. (8) The government acknowledged that officials are unfamiliar with the 2014 anti-trafficking law and thus are not sufficiently familiar with the concepts of the worst forms of child labor. (11,16,41) Burundi lacks formal guidance for authorities on how to respond to cases potentially involving the worst forms of child labor, and law enforcement lacked sufficient training to properly identify such cases. Although a referral mechanism between law enforcement and social services exists, civil society organizations indicate it is utilized on an ad hoc basis, thus making it difficult to ensure survivors receive services. (11,18) In general, agencies lacked resources necessary to respond to survivors' needs and had to rely primarily on services from civil society and international organizations. (11,19) During the reporting period, 90 street children were arrested by police. Street children who are arrested are often taken to temporary rehabilitation centers, which have been presented as prisons for children, before being returned to their families. (22,46) The government did not provide complete information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report, including the number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and penalties imposed. (8)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including insufficient resources.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Multisector Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Under the Child and Family Department and the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights, and Gender, works with the Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Employment and local NGOs to address child protection issues, including the worst forms of child labor. (6,7,47) Has made strides in reaching areas beyond the capital region, with a greater presence and ability to respond to cases upcountry. However, it is primarily funded by UNICEF and small NGOs, and reporting suggests that its resources are still insufficient to fully address the worst forms of child labor. (47)

In addition to the key coordinating mechanism above, Burundi's Consultation and Monitoring Commission on Prevention and Repression of Trafficking in Persons began operations as a permanent formal inter-ministerial body in January 2022. (44,45) The Commission oversees national anti-trafficking efforts and the national social protection policy. (8) During the reporting period, the Commission promoted and implemented standard operating procedures for identifying trafficking cases and referring survivors to appropriate services and care, including comprehensive processes and screening protocols, and organized trainings for government officials such as police officers, social workers, judges, and diplomats. It also drafted a new national action plan to combat human trafficking for 2023–2027, which was forwarded to the Office of the Prime Minister for approval. (8,44) However, the Commission currently lacks the resources and training required to collect data and report on cases of human trafficking. (44)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of relevant policies covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Protection Policy 2020–2024	Aims to ensure child welfare systemically by increasing understanding of children's rights; preventing discrimination, abuse, and exploitation; identifying issues and intervening quickly and effectively using the appropriate community mechanisms; and building the economic and general resilience of children, families, and communities. (23,48) Conducted awareness-raising activities among local administrators and educational leaders about child labor during the reporting period. (23)
Burundi National Development Plan (2018–2027)	Aims to address economic and social challenges in the country, with goals to target poverty and access to education. Seeks to enhance youth employment through strategies such as updates to the labor code and improvements in basic and vocational education. (49) As part of this policy and in cooperation with the UN, Burundi continued its Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan during the reporting period. In 2022, the program provided food assistance and core relief items to 21,157 returning refugees. (50-52)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (53)

In 2022, the government had yet to renew its national action plan to address child labor, which expired in 2015, or its anti-trafficking plan, which expired in 2020. (8,44) While Burundi has broad child protection and national development policies, it does not have a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor. (47)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Centers for Family Development†	Operated by the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights, and Gender, address human rights issues, including child exploitation. Coordinate with Child Protection Committees to refer survivors to local NGOs for care, when necessary. (54) Remained active during the reporting period, including reintegrating 15 street children with their home communities. (8)
Education Cannot Wait, Burundi Multi-Year Resilience Program	Launched in 2021, a collaborative agreement among the Government of Burundi, UNICEF, and World Vision (2022–2024), a 3-year, \$30 million program aiming to provide educational opportunities to 300,000 vulnerable children and reduce the risks of exploitation, including child labor, for vulnerable families. (55,56) During the reporting period, interventions included cash transfers to promote school retention, dignity kits for adolescent girls, increasing and improving classroom infrastructure, school feeding programs, and providing learning materials. (57)
National School Feeding Program†	Initiated in 2008, the National School Feeding Program, sponsored by Burundi's First Lady, is designed to reduce child labor by increasing school retention. In addition to funding received from international donors, the program was granted several million USD in funding from the Government of Burundi during the reporting period, and provided meals to children in 664 schools throughout the country. (8,58,59)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is partially funded by the Government of Burundi.

In addition to the programs above, the government also collaborated with UNICEF to develop a national strategy for integration and inclusion of the Batwa population, which includes sensitization programs to integrate Batwa children into schools in Ngozi and other provinces. UNICEF also works with local governments to secure identity documents for Burundian children repatriating from abroad. (8) However, research found no evidence that the government has carried out programs to assist children working in agriculture, in which child labor is most prevalent.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Burundi (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Establish by law an age up to which education is compulsory that extends to age 16, the minimum age for employment.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2012 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2022
Enforcement	Conduct targeted inspections in sectors and geographic areas in which child labor is known to be prevalent, including in agriculture and the informal sector.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information on child labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of routine targeted inspections.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that children engaged in begging are not arrested, and that they receive adequate social services and reintegration support.	2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 40 to 125 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 5 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Provide sufficient funding and resources to the Inspector General of Work and Social Security to cover needs such as travel, fuel, and computer equipment.	2009 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and penalties imposed related to the criminal enforcement of child labor laws.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officials receive adequate training on laws pertaining to the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies and other agencies responsible for responding to human trafficking have the resources, guidance, and capacity necessary to investigate cases and provide services to survivors.	2019 – 2022	

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen referral mechanisms between law enforcement agencies, social services, and civil society organizations to ensure that cases are properly investigated and survivors receive services.	2020 – 2022
Coordination	Improve the capacity of the Multisector Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor to ensure coverage in areas outside of the capital city.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the Consultation and Monitoring Commission on Prevention and Repression of Trafficking in Persons is provided with sufficient resources and training to collect data and report effectively on cases of human trafficking.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt and implement policies that address all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as a national child labor action plan and a national trafficking in persons action plan.	2015 – 2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education by eliminating school-related fees; increasing the number of educators; expanding infrastructure to accommodate the needs of female and disabled students; and increasing birth registration rates for populations such as the Batwa ethnic group.	2015 – 2022
	Institute new programs and expand existing ones in sectors in which child labor is prevalent, including in agriculture.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Cabo Verde made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The General Legal Framework for the Protection of Children and Adolescents was approved by legislators during the reporting period. The Framework contains provisions addressing forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation and formalizes procedures for addressing situations in which children or adolescents are in danger. The government also reported its first worst forms of child labor conviction in recent years, imposing a 10-year sentence against an individual for the commercial sexual exploitation of a 14-year-old child. Additionally, the government began working on a new National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and the Cabo Verdean Institute for Children and Adolescents and the National Statistics Institute conducted a survey on children, which included statistics on child labor. However, children in Cabo Verde are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Although Cabo Verde made efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize practices similar to slavery or debt bondage and forced or compulsory labor. In addition, coordination among law enforcement agencies is limited and social programs to assist children involved in agriculture and domestic work are not sufficient to address the scope of the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Cabo Verde.

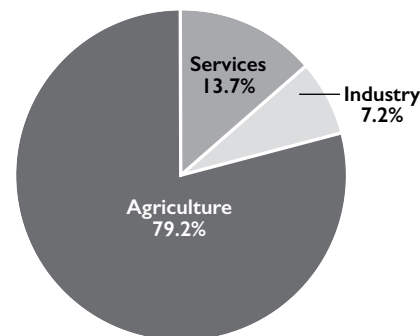
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	3.2 (2,392)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	90.1
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	1.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		100.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Inquérito as Despesas e Receitas Familiares (HHS), 2001–2002. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including carrying heavy loads† (3-7)
	Raising livestock (8)
	Artisanal fishing in small boats† (7-9)
Industry	Construction, including sand extraction (5,9)
Services	Domestic work (3-7)
	Street work, including vending, garbage scavenging,† car washing, and begging (5,7,9-11)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,12-15)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (8,11)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

During the reporting period, the Cabo Verdean Institute for Children and Adolescents (ICCA) and the National Statistics Institute conducted a survey on children, including child labor, slated for release in 2023. (16)




Commercial sexual exploitation of boys and girls occurs in the tourism industry in Cabo Verde, and research indicates that the islands of Sal and Boa Vista have the highest incidence of commercial sexual exploitation of children. (8,11-14) In addition, anecdotal reports indicate that children may have been victims of commercial sexual exploitation on the islands of Brava, Santiago, Fogo, and São Vicente. (11)

According to the ICCA, not all students with special needs or children in remote areas of Cabo Verde have equal access to education. In some areas, children must travel long distances through mountainous topography to reach secondary schools. (16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Cabo Verde has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Cabo Verde's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of forced labor.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 261 of the Labor Code (17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 264 of the Labor Code; Article 133 of the Civil Code (17,18)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		National List of Dangerous Work for Children (19)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 14 of Chapter 3 of the Labor Code; Articles 271 and 271-A of the Penal Code (17,20,21)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 149 and 271-A of the Penal Code (20)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 144, 145, 148–150, and 271-A of the Penal Code (20)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 8 of the Drug Trafficking Law (22)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 31 of the Military Service Law (23)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of the Military Service Law (23)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 268-C of the Penal Code (20)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 13 and 20 of the Education Law (24)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 14 of the Education Law (24)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (25)

The General Legal Framework for the Protection of Children and Adolescents was approved by legislators during the reporting period, although additional steps must occur for it to enter into effect. The Framework contains provisions addressing forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation and formalizes procedures for addressing situations in which children or adolescents are in danger. (16,26)

Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient because they do not criminalize practices similar to slavery, including debt bondage and forced or compulsory labor. (17,20) The Civil Code includes a list of light work activities that children aged 14 are allowed to perform; however, the law does not prescribe the number of hours per week permissible for light work, nor does it specify the conditions under which light work may be performed. (18,27,28)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Inspectorate General of Labor (IGT)	Monitors and enforces child labor laws, working closely with the Cabo Verdean Institute for Children and Adolescents (ICCA). Overseen by the Ministry of Family, Inclusion, and Social Development. (5,6)
Attorney General's Office	Determines whether reported complaints or violations need further investigation and prepares cases for trial, including cases of the worst forms of child labor. (16)
National Police and Judicial Police	The National Police receives initial violation complaints, and the Judicial Police conducts criminal investigations as needed. (16)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Cabo Verde took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Inspectorate General of Labor (IGT) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial and human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	\$372,693 (16)
Number of Labor Inspectors	21 (5)	20 (16)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A	Yes (16)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	1,087 (5)	724 (16)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (5)	0 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	1 (5)	0 (16)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	1 (5)	0(16)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (16)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (16)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (16)

During the reporting period, IGT inspectors participated in a capacity-building program focused on addressing hazardous child labor, and a delegation from the IGT participated in a month-long training related to youth employment funded by the ILO. (16) Additionally, approximately 70 participants, many representing government institutions, attended a conference on international labor standards and Cabo Verdean labor law that was held as part of the ILO's Trade for Decent Work Project with the intent of strengthening the implementation of forced labor and child labor conventions. (30)

ICCA conducts informal inspections when it receives any allegations of child labor and keeps the Attorney General's Office informed whenever further investigative action is needed. All child labor cases found by IGT inspectors are referred to ICCA for care or for referral to social services providers. (5) From January to July 2022, ICCA registered six reported cases of child labor through its child protection hotline. (16)

The IGT reported that the number of labor inspectors is insufficient to cover the country's labor force. The IGT also reported that its budget is not sufficient to fulfill all of its operational needs. (16)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Cabo Verde took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the government's limited capacity to collect anti-trafficking statistics and comprehensively report on law enforcement actions.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown	Yes (16)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	2 (16)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	1 (30)
Number of Convictions	1 (31)	1 (30)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (30)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (16)

In 2022, the government reported its first worst forms of child labor conviction in recent years, imposing a 10-year sentence against an individual for the commercial sexual exploitation of a 14-year-old child. (16)

Reports indicate that the Judicial Police and the National Police often lack the necessary financial and human resources to conduct thorough investigations, including in cases of child labor. (30) The government's capacity to collect anti-trafficking statistics and to comprehensively report on law enforcement actions, along with the reportedly limited coordination among law enforcement agencies, due to struggles in sharing case information and updates, may hinder enforcement efforts. (8, 11) Reports also indicate that the judicial system is overburdened with a backlog of cases, which can contribute to a lack of protection for child victims of the worst forms of child labor, including children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation. (12,30,32)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee for Child Labor Prevention and Eradication in Cabo Verde	Coordinates the execution of the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and provides a functional mechanism for reciprocal referrals between law enforcement and social services. (16) Led by ICCA, with support from the Ministry of Family, Inclusion, and Social Development. (5,33) Active during the reporting period. (16)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor	Prioritizes the eradication of child labor. Outlines specific objectives, including data collection, institutional capacity building, and enhancement of measures to prevent, protect, and remove children from involvement in child labor. (33) Activities were undertaken to implement this policy in 2022. (16)
National Plan to Prevent and Combat Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents (2022–2024)	Aims to prevent and eliminate the sexual exploitation of children by building on lessons learned from the previous plan, while ensuring coordination among institutions and organizations that work to prevent and address sexual violence against children and adolescents. Establishes five goals, including (1) the active participation of children and adolescents; (2) the development of preventive actions against sexual violence; (3) a network of specialized care by trained professionals; (4) combating impunity; and (5) strengthening the national, regional, and local entities focused on combating and eliminating sexual violence against children and adolescents, including commercial sexual exploitation. (34) In 2022, the government began preparations for the creation of a national committee to manage and monitor the National Plan to Prevent and Combat Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents and draft local plans. The committee will consist of representatives from ICCA, UNICEF, the Cabo Verdean NGO Platform, and the education, health, and public ministries. (16)
National Communication Strategy for the Prevention and Combat of Sexual Violence	Aims to coordinate public policies to protect children and adolescents against sexual violence, including commercial sexual exploitation. (34) Implemented during the reporting period in collaboration with UNICEF, ICCA, and the Ministry of Family, Inclusion and Social Development. (16)

In 2022, the government began developing a new national action plan on human trafficking to succeed the 2018–2021 plan, and while the new plan was not approved during the reporting period, a national drafting committee approved its goals and activities in December. (30)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating and preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Child Labor Awareness Campaigns†	Government program implemented by ICCA and the National Committee for Child Labor Prevention and Eradication that conducts national awareness-raising campaigns on the worst forms of child labor. (5) During the reporting period, several awareness campaigns addressing the rights of children, including the prevention and elimination of child labor, were conducted on a national level with various governmental and NGO institutions. ICCA further reported that, in 2022, about 425 community activities were conducted on a variety of children's rights topics, including child labor. (35)
Help for At-Risk Children and Social Protection and Reintegration Centers†	ICCA-implemented program that provides education, health services, and professional training to vulnerable children and their families. (32) Operates six day centers for street children vulnerable to sexual and labor exploitation, including sex trafficking. Moreover, ICCA operates three additional centers for street children through its <i>Nós Kaza</i> center. (32) The government also operates five long-term social protection and reintegration centers that provide support and educational integration services to children who have experienced long-term trauma, including child trafficking. (36) Active in 2022. (16)

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
Child Emergency Centers†	ICCA-implemented program that operates two emergency centers for child victims of abuse and sexual exploitation on Santiago and São Vicente islands, operating 24/7. (33,36) Active in 2022. (16)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Cabo Verde.

Research indicates that awareness-raising efforts on human trafficking, including child sex tourism, remained insufficient on some of the nine inhabited islands. (11) Research also found that programs to assist children involved in agriculture and domestic work are not sufficient to address the scope of the problem.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Cabo Verde (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery and practices similar to slavery, including debt bondage and forced or compulsory labor.	2021 – 2022
	Prescribe by law the number of hours per week and conditions under which light work may be undertaken by children.	2015 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the Inspectorate General of Labor is provided with an adequate budget to fulfill all its needs.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the number of labor inspectors is sufficient to address the scope of the problem.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal investigators receive sufficient financial and human resources to conduct thorough investigations, including investigations of child labor.	2014 – 2022
	Develop a system to compile and share comprehensive anti-trafficking in persons and victim identification data among criminal enforcement agencies to improve coordination efforts.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the judiciary has sufficient resources and personnel to allow cases to be prosecuted in a timely manner.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that students with special needs and children in remote areas have equal access to education, including by providing adequate transportation.	2020 – 2022
	Conduct awareness-raising activities on human trafficking, including child sex tourism, on all nine inhabited islands.	2018 – 2022
	Institute programs to address child labor in agriculture and domestic work.	2010 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Cambodia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Cambodia launched and committed \$10 million to the National Action Plan on Early Childhood Care and Development, which aims to provide equitable and inclusive early childhood education and prioritizes an expansion of early learning curriculum, improved teaching materials, and a strengthened preschool workforce. Cambodia's Inter-Ministries Technical Working Group also drafted the Child Protection Law, which outlines children's rights and provides detailed information on how officials should conduct child-centered case management and referrals to social services. Despite initiatives to address child labor, Cambodia is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement practices that delay advancement to eliminate child labor.



The government failed to take active measures to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence public officials who participate in or facilitate the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children and debt-based forced labor in brick kilns. In addition, judges, police, and labor inspectors were reported to have accepted bribes to overlook child labor offenses in the country, especially when the perpetrator had alleged ties with the government. Children in Cambodia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced labor in brickmaking. The government also failed to publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts. Moreover, the lack of regulation in the microfinance industry has led to debt bondage and an increase in child labor.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Cambodia.

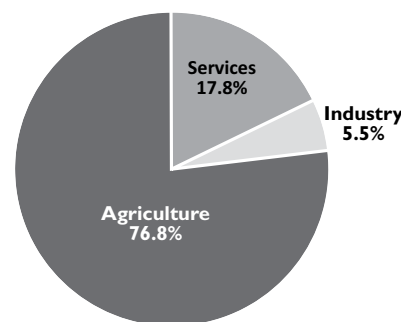
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.5 (243,371)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	87.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		90.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), 2017. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Fishing, including deep-sea† and night fishing† (3-9)
	Peeling shrimp (8, 11, 12)
	Production of palm oil, bananas, tobacco, cassava, rubber, and rice (3, 8, 9, 11-14)

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Growing, cutting, tying, carrying,† and spraying pesticides† on sugarcane (3,8,9,14,15)
	Logging† for the production of timber (7,8,11)
	Production of salt (16,17)
	Production of bovines (18,19)
Industry	Making bricks,† including feeding clay into brickmaking machines, removing wood fuel from trucks and feeding to brickmaking machines, drying bricks, transporting bricks to the oven,† and loading bricks onto and off of trucks (3,5,12,14,20)
	Construction,† including operating transportation equipment† (3,5,9,13,14,21)
	Production of textiles, including bleaching,† dyeing,† and finishing with chemicals;† garments; and footwear (5,9,11,14,22,23)
	Production of alcoholic beverages† (5,7,11)
	Working in slaughterhouses† for the production of meat† (5,7)
Services	Manufacturing of wood and metal† products (5)
	Domestic work (3,5,13,16,24,25)
	Work as security guards† and in entertainment,† including as bartenders,† masseurs,† dancers,† and waiters† (3-5,9,14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Street work, including car washing, begging, vending, garbage scavenging, collecting garbage, and exploitation by orphanages to fraudulently lure donations from tourists (3,13,14,21,26-29)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,13,27,29,30)
	Forced begging and street vending (7,13,14,28)
	Forced labor in the production of bricks (9,11,13,14,31,32)
	Forced labor in fishing (4)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

The rapid growth in the construction industry in Cambodia has increased the demand for bricks and fueled child labor and debt bondage in the country. Failed harvests from droughts have compounded farmers' debts, forcing them to sell their harvests to brick kiln owners and subsequently placing farmers' families into debt bondage. (3,9,13,20,30,31,33-35) Research also found that children work under similar debt bondage conditions in rubber plantations in northeastern Cambodia and in domestic work. (14) In addition, foreign investments in Cambodian banana production have resulted in the considerable use of child laborers on banana plantations in Kampong Cham and Ratanakiri provinces, many of which expose workers, including children, to dangerous chemicals and subsequent hospitalizations. (16,36) Furthermore, in recent years, the microfinance industry in the country has grown rapidly with inadequate regulation, leading to an increasing number of overburdened debtors. Cambodian human rights organizations cite cases of extrajudicial land sales, child labor, and debt bondage linked to the microfinance crisis. (16,37,38) Research also showed that children were taken out of school so they could work to help with credit repayment difficulties. (37) Although Cambodia conducted a nationwide survey of child labor in 2019, it has yet to publish the results of this survey or make the data publicly available, limiting public awareness of the true prevalence of child labor in the country. (14,27)

Cambodia is a source and destination country for child trafficking—on fishing vessels, in the agriculture and construction sectors, in factories, in domestic work (often through debt-based coercion), or for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC). (13,24,26,27,30,35) Girls as young as age 14 are trafficked to China for CSEC. Many of these girls previously worked in the garment, hospitality, and tourism sectors, which were particularly stunted by the COVID-19 pandemic, pushing them to seek out livelihood opportunities elsewhere and making them vulnerable to CSEC and other forms of child labor. (27,29,39,40) Online sexual exploitation of children is also reportedly increasing in Cambodia, facilitated by an increase in access to high-speed internet. (9,26,27,41,42) In addition, research found that children who are placed in some residential care facilities or orphanages in Cambodia are at a higher risk of engaging in child labor. (9,13,26,27,43,44)




MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Although the Education Law establishes free basic education, unofficial school-related fees, such as for extra classes or school uniforms, are prohibitive for some families. (3,14,45) Other barriers to education include denied enrollment for children without birth certificates, limited transportation to schools in remote areas, lack of drinking water, a severe shortage of teachers, language barriers, and a lack of safe sanitation conditions in some schools. (7,16,46) Sanitation conditions are particularly unsafe in Cambodia's "floating schools" on or near fishing communities, to which children as young as age 6 row themselves by boat each day. (16) These barriers disproportionately affect ethnic minority children, indigenous children, children with disabilities, girls, and children from rural and disadvantaged communities. (3,9,13,14,16,43,46-48) During the reporting period, the UN Child Rights Committee expressed concern over a Cambodian draft law proposing segregated classes for children with disabilities, fearing the exclusion of children with disabilities from adequate education. (49)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Cambodia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Cambodia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of criminal prohibitions for the use of a child for pornographic performances in private spaces or through communication and information technologies.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 177 of the Labor Law (50)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 173 and 177 of the Labor Law; Regulation on the Prohibition of Hazardous Child Labor; Articles 339 and 340 of the Penal Code (50-52)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Regulation on the Prohibition of Hazardous Child Labor (51)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 15 and 16 of the Labor Law; Articles 10, 12, 15–17, and 19 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation; Article 80 of Law on Juvenile Justice (50,53,54)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 10–20 and 22 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (53)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 15, 28, 33–37, and 41 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation; Articles 284, 289, and 346 of the Penal Code (52,53)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 345 of the Penal Code; Articles 3 and 47 of the Law on Control of Drugs (52,55)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 42 of the Law on General Statutes for the Military Personnel of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (56)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 41 and 42 of the Law on General Statutes for the Military Personnel of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (56)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 31 of the Education Law (45)

During the reporting period, Cambodia's Inter-Ministries Technical Working Group drafted the Child Protection Law, which outlines children's rights and provides detailed information on how officials should conduct child-centered case management and referrals to social services. (16,57) However, Cambodia lacks compulsory schooling, which makes children under age 15 particularly vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to be in school but are not yet legally permitted to work. (45,50,51,58) In addition, although the Labor Code prohibits work by children under age 15, the law does not apply to children outside of formal employment relationships and, therefore, does not conform to international standards that require all children be protected under the law that sets a minimum age for work. (43,51) Moreover, the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training's (MOLVT) regulation on household work extends minimum age protections for domestic workers to age 18 and provides clear definitions of household work, but it does not specify legal protections for household workers employed in informal relationships, including when working for their relatives without a contract. (43,50,58,59) Finally, Cambodian laws do not sufficiently prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children, as the use of a child for pornographic performances is criminally prohibited in public places but not in private spaces or through the use of communication and information technologies. (27,52,60)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MOLVT)	Enforces child-related provisions of the Labor Law and trains Commune Committees for Women and Children that oversee local child labor monitoring systems. (12,61,62) Tasked with removing children from child labor, including at brick kilns. (9) Head of the MOLVT's Child Labor Bureau also serves as the Secretary General of the National Committee on Countering Child Labor (NCCL). (9,14,61) Refers cases involving possible criminal violations to the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department. (16) During the reporting year, held an International Children's Day event with 325 participants to raise awareness of child labor, and conducted 39 educational child labor prevention campaigns for 9,122 workers at consumer goods factories. (29) In 2022, also conducted 400 inspections to prevent child labor at brick kilns and other agro-industry enterprises. (29) Reports note that Commune Committees were likely underfunded during the reporting period. (63,64) Furthermore, research indicated that the MOLVT's labor inspectorate struggled to coordinate training with the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction on ensuring safe working conditions and identifying child labor in inspections of construction sites. (3)
Ministry of the Interior—Cambodian National Police—Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department (AHTJP)	Enforces laws against human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children in collaboration with municipal and provincial anti-human trafficking and juvenile protection offices; reports to the AHTJP Department Director. (26,29) Provides training to labor inspectors. (29) Fields complaints from the public about human trafficking, which can be filed through the anti-human trafficking hotline. (63) Oversees the Information and Technology Office, which searches for evidence of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children on the internet, in printed media, and in other sources. (27,61,65) During the reporting year, in collaboration with Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSAVY), piloted new standard operating procedures to clarify the workflow and accountability of stakeholders tasked to address children's issues. (29)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Provincial Police Commissariats—Bureaus of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection and Bureaus of Criminal Police	Through their Anti-Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Bureaus, enforce laws against human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children at the provincial level and coordinates with the AHTJP. (14,63) Through their Criminal Police Bureaus, enforce criminal laws at the provincial level. (14,63)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Cambodia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MOLVT that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws, including financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Number of Labor Inspectors	602 (3)	592 (16)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (50)	Yes (50)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (3)	Yes (16)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	176 (3)	252 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (3)	1 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (3)	1 (16)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (3)	1 (16)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Yes (16)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (50)	Yes (50)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (66)	Yes (16)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (16)

Research indicates that Cambodia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. Reporting also indicates that labor inspectorates at the provincial level are unable to adequately enforce child labor laws due to insufficient funding and resources. (67) Evidence suggests that labor inspectors and other law enforcement personnel are unwilling to investigate child labor allegations involving powerful business owners. (16) In addition, law enforcement officials have requested bribes from employers when child labor violations have been found. Malfeasance within the MOLVT and law enforcement agencies limits the capacity of local authorities to adequately enforce regulations for children related to hazardous work, resulting in penalties related to the worst forms of child labor rarely being imposed in accordance with the law. (16,43,68)

The government did not provide disaggregated data on the sectors in which labor inspections were conducted, the locations of inspections, or labor inspectorate funding. (16) Research suggests that the government does not proactively conduct inspections in all sectors in which child labor is suspected to occur, and that authorities were known to give employers advance notice of inspections, enabling them to conceal abuses. (9, 12) In addition, while unannounced inspections are permitted, the MOLVT indicated they are not plausible, as the inspectors are not yet equipped with the proper technical training and expertise. (3,9,14,16,69) Furthermore, although the MOLVT states that their inspectors can conduct "special inspections" in informal sectors in which children are believed to work (including agriculture, casinos, construction, domestic work, the entertainment sector, fishing, begging, scavenging, and street vending), these only take place when a specific request has been made or a serious violation reported. (16) Police also view brick kiln inspection as the MOLVT's responsibility and said they would only investigate a kiln if the MOLVT asked them to and reported suspected criminal activity. (38) Labor inspectors are also prevented from conducting inspections at some construction sites, as owners who are closely

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affiliated with government officials or powerful tycoons are able to obstruct inspectors from accessing their properties. (14,30,63,66)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Cambodia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Cambodian National Police that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws, including insufficient training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (16)

The government failed to provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for the reporting period. (16) Evidence indicates that some government officials profited directly from the commercial sexual exploitation of children and indirectly by being permissive of it, especially when it is undertaken in establishments owned by those with ties to the government. (3,13,29,30,70,71) NGO contacts claim that the government has limited political will to investigate any Cambodian officials complicit in these illegal activities, and there was no evidence of public officials being investigated, prosecuted, or convicted during the reporting period. (3,13,24,30,43,64) Law enforcement officials investigating suspected human trafficking cases are expected to personally cover all expenses of the investigation and are rarely reimbursed in full or on time, which makes some law enforcement units more susceptible to malfeasance. (9,24,38,71)

Available research found that prosecutors and judges have been known to accept bribes in return for dismissal of charges, acquittal, and reduced sentencing. (12,27,38,71,72) The use of "judicial supervision," where defendants are released on their own recognizance in advance of a trial, has resulted in human trafficking suspects not returning to participate in their criminal trials as law enforcement lacks the resources to monitor defendants. Law enforcement rarely issued arrest warrants for absconded defendants unless NGOs were available to assist in the apprehension of said defendants. (38) Research found that due to outdated collection storage platforms, a lack of resources, and an absence in coordination among relevant government institutions, the government's ability to properly save and store data related to the worst forms of child labor was found to be inadequate. (12,24,30,63)

From January to September 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation helped reintegrate 91 Cambodian victims and suspected victims of human trafficking back into their communities, including 62 women and 15 children. It also referred 2,227 victims of human trafficking to social services, 672 of whom were women and 1,519 were children. (29)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including insufficient inter-ministerial coordination.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee on Countering Child Labor (NCCL)	Serves as the primary interagency coordinating body for the government's various ministries on child labor issues. The Minister of Labor serves as its chair and the head of the MOLVT's Child Labor Bureau serves as the Secretary General. (3) Coordination across relevant ministries remains a challenge. (16) During the reporting period, established 14 municipal and provincial committees focused on countering child labor. (16) The committee includes other ministries like the Interior Ministry, the Justice Ministry, and Women's Affairs Ministry. (16)

During the reporting year, the National Committee for Counter Trafficking implemented an awareness campaign for 350 teachers focused on internet safety for children and the prevention of online child sexual exploitation. (29)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan of Action on Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2025)	Aims to build the capacity of law enforcement officers, strengthen enforcement of relevant laws, raise public awareness of child labor issues, and enhance child labor monitoring systems at the community level. (21) Overseen by MOLVT. (14) Creates a roadmap to the complete eradication of the worst forms of child labor by 2025 in various sectors, including services, agriculture, mining, and energy. (23,58,63,73) Mandates awareness-raising activities, legal action, and collaborations with civil society actors. (73) Although research was unable to determine specific activities carried out under the Plan of Action during the reporting period, MOLVT reports they conducted trainings and conferences in the city and in provinces to raise public awareness about child labor. (16)
Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017–2023)	Plan was set to end in 2021 but was extended through 2023. (16) Original plan was run by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and was developed in response to the Cambodia Violence Against Children Survey conducted in 2013. (27,65,74) Provided Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OSEC)-related interventions in policy and governance, including providing training for teachers and developing curriculum to help children build online safety skills; providing OSEC materials to law enforcement; and developing an online hotline to help identify platforms that perpetuate OSEC. (9,27) Details of the extended plan have not been made publicly available. (16)
Action Plan for Gender Equality Promotion and Child Labor Elimination in the Fisheries Sector (2022–2026)†	Aims to prevent and withdraw children from child labor and hazardous work in the fisheries sector, and to improve monitoring and evaluation mechanisms on child labor in this sector. Overseen, coordinated, and monitored by the Fisheries Administration, which falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. (75) During the reporting year, trained local officials and conducted workshops in several provinces to raise public awareness of gender and child labor. (16)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (6,54,76-79)

In 2022, the government also launched and committed \$10 million to the National Action Plan on Early Childhood Care and Development, which aims to provide equitable and inclusive early childhood education and prioritizes an expansion of early learning curriculum, improved teaching materials, and a strengthened preschool workforce. (80)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address all worst forms of child labor.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Cambodia Countering Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP) (2019–2023)	\$10 million, USAID-funded, 5-year (including a 1-year cost extension) program implemented by Winrock International to strengthen the capacity of government and community stakeholders to prevent human trafficking, protect at-risk populations, and increase the number of successful prosecutions of perpetrators. (81) During the reporting period, CCTIP and the Cambodian National Committee to Combat Trafficking began developing a 2-year action plan based on new human trafficking patterns in the country. Additionally, CCTIP awarded a 2-year grant to NGO International Justice Mission to reduce bonded labor in Cambodia's brick manufacturing industry and in cross-border online scamming/gaming. (16,82)
UN WFP Country Program† (2020–2024)	Multi-government and private sector-funded program implemented in collaboration with the Government of Cambodia that includes a school feeding program for children in need. (83) Provided school meals to over 200,000 children in 2022. (16)
Child Protection Programs	Family Care First (FCF REACT) (2015–2023) is led by MOSAVY. Funded by the European Union, USAID, the GHR Foundation, Save the Children Hong Kong, and UNICEF. (65,84) Aims to support more than 7,000 Cambodian children to live in safe, nurturing, family-based care. (65,84,85) Activities include supporting the development of Social Service Workforce Training curriculum, the reintegration of children from residential care institutions to family-based care, the closure of residential care institutions, and the provision of prevention and response social services. (3) During the reporting period, FCF provided cash and livelihood assistance to over 700 recipients, intended to reduce trafficking risks for children in extreme poverty. (16) Cambodia Child Protection Program (2009–2023) is led by UNICEF and MOSAVY, and aims to strengthen the child protection system in Cambodia and to prevent and reduce violence against children and unnecessary family separation. (14,63) Builds capacity of national and sub-national authorities in all 25 provinces to formulate and implement nationally-approved institutional and legal frameworks. Includes capacity building of the government and civil society child protection workforce to provide direct services to vulnerable children and families. (14) The government stated that the program is operational but failed to report implementation activities conducted during the reporting period. (12)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (86,87)

The government has yet to create a system to monitor and promote the reintegration of victims of forced labor and human trafficking, including children. As a result, survivors are left vulnerable, leaving the government heavily reliant on NGOs to fill this need. (27,38,64) Many poor households in rural communities lack access to a social protection safety net, increasing the vulnerability of children to child labor as a means to supplement family income. (88) Although Cambodia has programs that target child labor, the scope and resources provided to these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in online sexual exploitation of children. (44)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Cambodia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those engaged in informal work in domestic work and employed by their relatives.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child for pornographic performances in not only public spaces, but also private spaces or through the use of communication and information technologies.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law a compulsory education age and ensure that it is same as the minimum age for work (age 15).	2009 – 2022
Enforcement	Build the capacity of labor law enforcement authorities to enforce child and forced labor regulations by providing more technical training opportunities on how to properly identify child labor during inspections and offer sufficient resources to labor law authorities to ensure the enforcement of child labor laws through investigations and inspections, including unannounced inspections.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure and permit labor inspectors to conduct unannounced inspections in all sectors in which child labor are reported to occur, including in the construction and entertainment sectors, and impose penalties when child labor violations are found.	2021 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested	
Enforcement	Ensure that inspectors of construction sites are trained on identifying child labor violations and that such training is coordinated with the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training's labor inspectorate.	2021 – 2022	
	Increase regulation of microfinance and lending institutions to reduce borrowers' vulnerability to debt-based coercion; provide support to children whose families are victims of predatory microfinance institutions.	2022	
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 592 to 601 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 9 million people.	2022	
	Establish and uniformly administer penalties for violations of laws on child labor, including its worst forms, in accordance with the parameters prescribed by law.	2009 – 2022	
	Collect, properly store, and publicly release disaggregated data on labor and criminal law enforcement efforts, including labor inspectorate funding, initial training for new criminal investigators, the number of prosecutions initiated, the number of convictions, and the number of penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2022	
	Ensure that malfeasance is addressed in all law enforcement agencies, including not accepting bribes to influence the outcome of cases or providing tip offs in advance of raids, and investigating and prosecuting politically connected individuals and government officials who are complicit in facilitating and profiting from the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022	
	Ensure that all criminal law enforcement officials are sufficiently trained on the techniques of how to conduct anti-trafficking work, particularly those located in rural areas and in brick kilns.	2019 – 2022	
	Ensure that funding for criminal law enforcement agencies is sufficient to cover all expenses, including transportation costs, for law enforcement officials.	2019 – 2022	
	Ensure that inspectors routinely conduct inspections in informal sectors where children are believed to work ("special inspections") and not only when a specific request or violation is reported.	2022	
	Protect and prevent intimidation of human trafficking victims and allow them access to protection services pending court proceedings.	2019 – 2022	
Coordination	Develop procedures to monitor human trafficking perpetrators pending trial.	2022	
	Ensure that the Commune Committees for Women and Children are sufficiently funded and able to carry out their intended mandate.	2019 – 2022	
	Improve inter-ministerial coordination to address child labor.	2022	
	Government Policies	Publish activities undertaken to implement the National Plan of Action on Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2025) during the reporting period.	2022
		Publish activities undertaken to implement the Cambodia Child Protection Program (2009–2023) during the reporting year.	2022
		Publish the extended Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017–2023).	2022
	Social Programs	Publish the results of the 2019 nationwide child labor survey.	2020 – 2022
		Strengthen child protection services, gatekeeping mechanisms, and the alternative care system to reduce the number of children unnecessarily placed in residential care and ensure that Residential Care Facilities and orphanages protect the health and well-being of children living in them.	2019 – 2022
		Increase access to free basic education by eliminating unofficial school-related fees; eliminating the requirement of a birth certificate to enroll in school; addressing issues related to limited transportation and inadequate school infrastructure, including the unsafe "floating schools" on or near fishing communities; eliminating barriers to school for ethnic minority children, indigenous children, children with disabilities, girls, and children from rural and disadvantaged communities; and providing safe, sanitary schools with access to water and latrines.	2013 – 2022
		Establish a system to accurately capture and monitor the reintegration of victims of the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking.	2019 – 2022
Expand social protection safety nets in rural areas to ensure that poor children and their families have access to services that may mitigate the risk of involvement in child labor.		2016 – 2022	
Provide sufficient funding resources to all social programs so that they can fully address the extent of child labor in Cambodia, particularly the online sexual exploitation of children.	2019 – 2022		

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In 2022, Cameroon made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Officials from the East Regional Delegate of the Ministry of Social Affairs identified 3,000 children engaged in child labor at 46 mining sites. In addition, the government inaugurated a new anti-trafficking hotline, 1503, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. Finally, the Government of Cameroon supported access to education by distributing 1,803,906 free textbooks to students at 13,000 primary schools and hiring an additional 3,000 primary school teachers. However, children in Cameroon are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in recruitment by non-state armed groups for use in conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in cocoa production and gold mining. The government has not addressed gaps in Cameroon's legal framework regarding the prohibition of use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs, and the prohibition of the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Cameroon. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	43.7 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	80.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	42.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		69.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS 5), 2014. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of bananas, kola nuts, cocoa, and coffee, including handling pesticides, using machetes, clearing fields, climbing trees, and lifting heavy loads† (3-5)
	Raising livestock (6)
	Fishing (6)
Industry	Working in artisanal gold mines† and gravel quarries,† transporting heavy loads of sand or gravel, breaking stones, handling mercury, and digging or standing in stagnant water to extract minerals (6-9)
	Construction, including carrying water, concrete, and cement blocks (3,5)
Services	Domestic work (3,10)
	Working in restaurants and as phone booth operators (3,6)
	Working in transportation, including as assistants to bus drivers (6,11,12)
	Street work, including vending and begging (3,6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,13,14)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including fighting, gathering intelligence, providing operational support as porters and cooks, and sexual slavery (6,13)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced labor in agriculture in the production of cocoa, cotton, onions, and tea; fishing; raising livestock; domestic work; spare parts shops; artisanal gold mines and gravel quarries; street vending; and construction (6,13)
	Forced begging (6,13)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking from neighboring countries in Central and West Africa; child trafficking also occurs within Cameroon. (6,13,14) Children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and forced labor in mining and agriculture. (13,14) Parents often entrust children to intermediaries who promise to take them to urban centers for education or improved living conditions, and these children are often subjected to exploitation. (13) In the artisanal mining sector in eastern Cameroon, children are subjected to hazardous conditions, including frequent collapses of open pit mines and use of dangerous chemicals including mercury. (6-8,15)




Several crises within Cameroon and in neighboring countries—including the Central African Republic refugee crisis; the Lake Chad Basin Crisis impacting Cameroon's Far North as well as Nigeria, Niger, and Chad; and the separatist crisis in Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions—have heightened children’s vulnerability. (16) As of December 2022, 3.9 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, and Cameroon was home to over 1 million displaced people and nearly half a million refugees, primarily from Nigeria and the Central African Republic. Disruptions to family livelihoods as a result of these crises place children at greater risk of human trafficking and child labor. (16) In 2022, in the Far North Region near Lake Chad, non-state armed group Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) recruited and used children. (6) English-speaking separatist groups in the Northwest and Southwest regions have recruited and used children as fighters. (6) Anecdotal evidence suggests that some community neighborhood watch groups in the Far North Region, known as Vigilance Committees, may have incorporated children into their ranks. Vigilance Committees carry out reconnaissance operations against Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa, and some receive non-lethal material support from the government. (6,13,14,17)

Ongoing violence in Cameroon and the surrounding regions has significantly disrupted children's schooling, making both Cameroonian and refugee children vulnerable to exploitation. In prior years, armed separatist groups have violently enforced school boycotts, leading to long-term disruptions of education for children in the Northwest and Southwest regions. (18) While calls for school boycotts subsided in 2022, separatists continued to attack and kidnap students and teachers who attended classes, often releasing them only after collecting ransom. (6,18) In addition, armed separatists have occupied and used schools as camps and bases for their operations. (18) According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 3,223 of 5,724 schools in the Northwest and Southwest regions are non-functional. (6) In the Far North Region, terrorist activity by Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa has also disrupted children’s schooling, and at least 66 schools remained closed in the aftermath of attacks. (6) Research suggests that roughly 36 percent of primary school students lack birth certificates, which are required to register for end-of-course examinations to enter secondary school. (3,19) Many public officials in the Northwest and Southwest regions have fled since the beginning of the crisis in those regions, reducing access to birth registration services. In addition, many internally displaced children lost their birth certificates as they fled the violence and have been unable to participate in end-of-course examinations. (3) The law guarantees free education up to the age of 12, but in practice, additional school fees are often charged and families must pay the cost of books and uniforms, which is a significant barrier for many families. (6,19,20) Further barriers to education include inadequate school facility infrastructure, including toilets and sanitation facilities, and an insufficient number of teachers. (6,21)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Cameroon has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Cameroon's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibition of the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 2 of Order N° 17 on Child Labor; Section 86 of the Labor Code (22,23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 9–23 of Order N° 017 on Child Labor; Section 86 of the Labor Code (22,23)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 9–23 of Order N° 017 on Child Labor (23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2–6 of the Law Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery; Sections 11 and 342-1 of the Penal Code; Section 2 of the Labor Code (22,24,25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Sections 2 and 4–6 of the Law Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery; Articles 11, 342-1, and 352–354 of the Penal Code (24,25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 294 and 344–347 of the Penal Code; Articles 76, 81, and 82 of the Law on Cybersecurity and Cyber-criminality (24,26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 12 of the Decree Concerning the Status of Non-Defense Military Personnel; Article 2a of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Admission to Military Training Schools for Officers (27,28)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 12 of the Decree Concerning the Status of Non-Defense Military Personnel; Article 2a of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Admission to Military Training Schools for Officers (27,28)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No	12‡	Preamble of the Constitution; Articles 9 and 16 of the Law Orienting the Education System (29,30)
Free Public Education	No		Article 9 of the Law Orienting the Education System; Articles 46-2, 47, and 48 of the Decree on the Organization of Public Schools (30,31)

* Country has no conscription (32)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (33)

Children in Cameroon are required to attend only 6 years of primary school, which typically concludes at age 12. This standard makes children ages 13 and 14 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. (29,30) In addition, the Decree on the Organization of Public Schools provides for free schooling only through primary school, but basic education is a total of 9 years

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and includes 3 years of lower secondary school. The failure to provide for complete free basic education may increase the risk of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor. (31) Human trafficking provisions do not meet international standards because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking, and individuals ages 16 to 18 are not considered children for the purposes of trafficking in persons provisions. (24,25) In addition, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children under age 18 are not comprehensive because work at dangerous heights and underwater is not prohibited. (23,34)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MINLSS)	Enforces labor laws, including those related to child labor, and promotes decent working conditions. (35)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Prosecutes cases referred by the General Delegate for National Security or the Ministry of Defense's National Gendarmerie (SED), and contributes to investigations, as appropriate. (3,35)
Criminal Law Enforcement Agencies	The General Delegate for National Security operates as the national police service of Cameroon, enforces laws against the worst forms of child labor, and investigates violations in urban areas. (3,35) Through its Special Vice Squad, it investigates cases of human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse against women and children. (3,35) The SED investigates cases of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in both urban and rural areas before referring cases to MOJ for prosecution. (3,35) It also operates a reporting hotline for human trafficking cases. (3,35,36)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Cameroon took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MINLSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,840,000 (3)	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	223 (3)	224 (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	5,348 (3)	5,481 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (3)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (3)	N/A (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (3)	N/A (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (3)	No (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (6)

While MINLSS reported that it did not find any cases of child labor during its inspections, other government ministries conducted inspections and identified children subjected to the worst forms of child labor. (6) In September 2022, a government official in the East Region reported that officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS) had identified 3,000 children engaged in child labor at 46 mining sites during the reporting year. (6) MINAS and the Ministry of Mines, Industries, and Technological Development carried out inspections at mining sites in the South Region and identified 10 children engaged in child labor. (6)

Research indicates that Cameroon does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,37) Labor inspectors do not conduct inspections in the informal sector, in which the majority of child labor occurs. (3,38) While the government did not provide for publication the labor inspectorate's funding, it reported that it allocated \$167,000 to child labor prevention and elimination efforts, in comparison with \$120,000 in 2021. (6) Despite this increase in funds, the labor inspectorate lacked sufficient resources, including transportation, to carry out its mission. (6) Government officials, journalists, and NGOs in the East Region indicated that labor inspections rarely took place, especially at rural mining sites at which children are known to work. (3,6) Although the government has not created a formal mechanism for filing and responding to complaints about child labor, cases of child labor can be reported directly to any of the institutions, including MINAS, MINLSS, the National Gendarmerie's State Defense Secretariat, and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). (6)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Cameroon took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (6)
Number of Investigations	0 (17)	Unknown (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (17)	Unknown (6)
Number of Convictions	0 (17)	Unknown (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (17)	Unknown (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (6)

In July 2022, the National Interpol Bureau coordinated with criminal law enforcement and social services agencies to identify Nigerian children in Cameroon who had been subjected to trafficking and forced labor in automobile shops in Cameroon. (6,39) In addition, MINAS inaugurated a government-sponsored anti-trafficking hotline, 1503, in cooperation with the IOM. The hotline allows real-time interaction with representatives from the police, gendarmerie, MOJ, and social and health services. (6) In May 2022, the government and the IOM held a workshop that trained 800 gendarmerie officers on trafficking in persons, case identification and investigation, and referral to social services and prosecution. (39) Law enforcement officers, however, did not receive training specifically addressing child labor, and criminal law enforcement agencies do not receive adequate funding to investigate the worst forms of child labor. (6,12,40) In 2013, MINAS and IOM developed the National Referral System and Standard Operating Procedures to coordinate the identification and assistance of human trafficking victims, including children found to be in the worst forms of child labor. Research shows no evidence of relevant stakeholders using this system during the reporting period. (6)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of resources to carry out mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee to Combat Child Labor (CNLCTE)	Coordinates government efforts to address child labor. Led by MINLSS and includes representatives from other ministries and government bodies as well as representatives from civil society. (41) In 2022, CNLCTE drafted a revision of the list of hazardous work prohibited for children, but the draft has not yet been made into law. (6) In addition, the Government of Cameroon carried out a communication seminar on universal social protection and the elimination of child labor. (6) Research indicates that CNLCTE has not made significant progress because of a lack of dedicated resources. There is also evidence to suggest that each of the government agencies represented in the committee looked for its own funding and initiated its own activities without significant coordination. (12)

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V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a policy specifically dedicated to addressing child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
NDS30 National Development Strategy (2020–2030)	Incorporates the reduction of poverty, improved access to basic services, and the elimination of child labor into the national development strategy. Calls for improved legal frameworks to address the worst forms of child labor, universal primary education enrollment and completion, and eventually, free education through 10 years of schooling. (42) In 2022, the Government of Cameroon provided public schools with tables, chairs, and scholarships to facilitate enrollment, especially in the Far North Region where education access has been hampered by insecurity. (6)
Operational Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (2021–2023)	Focuses on addressing trafficking in persons, including child trafficking. Objectives include raising awareness, improving the provision of services to human trafficking survivors, increasing prosecution of traffickers, enhancing data collection, and coordinating execution of anti-trafficking efforts. (43) Includes the goals of identifying and suppressing forced child labor and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (43) In 2022, the government continued to implement the action plan through relevant government ministries, and it began the process of updating the plan. (39)

In 2018, the Government of Cameroon drafted a National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Cameroon, 2018–2025. Although research could not confirm if the government has formally adopted this plan, various government ministries carried out activities in support of the plan in 2022, and the National Committee to Combat child Labor met to evaluate the plan's implementation. (6,17,38,44)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Project to Fight the Phenomenon of Street Children (Project 559)†	In conjunction with the National Employment Fund, this MINAS-funded program provides street children with health care, education, and psychosocial care, and supports the reintegration of street children by providing vocational training opportunities at the Betamba Childhood Institute. (3,4,40) During the reporting year, MINAS completed a modernization of the Betamba Childhood Institute. (6,39)
Support Project in Quality Management for Cocoa and Coffee Production/Forever Chocolate (2019–2025)†	Promotes labor standards in the cocoa industry, including the elimination of child labor. (5) Implemented by the NGO association <i>Enfant Jeunesse Avenir</i> , in partnership with Cameroon's largest cocoa processor, Cameroon Cacao Industrial Corporation. Key stakeholders of the project include government ministries such as the Ministry of Health, MINAS, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family, MINLSS, and the Ministry of Basic Education. (5) The project is implemented in cocoa production basins using the Farmer Field School Extension Approach and aims to train cocoa farmers to produce cocoa that is free of child labor and utilizes environmentally friendly techniques. (5) The project provides services to children at risk of child labor, including school-fee exemptions, school kits, and health services. Also seeks to empower women and provide families with alternative sources of income to limit the involvement of children in child labor. (3) In addition, the project includes monitoring and remediation systems aimed at ensuring the traceability of cocoa supply chains and eliminating child labor. (3) During the reporting period, the project expanded monitoring and remediation systems, encouraged school attendance by providing school kits and facilitating birth registration, and provided education and training to communities on child labor. (6)
Zero Children in Gold Mines‡	Project implemented by the state-owned National Mining Corporation, SONAMINES, to eliminate child labor in gold mining in the East Region, where there are more than 300 gold-mining sites. (3,14) During the reporting period, SONAMINES carried out a 5-day awareness-raising campaign promoting school attendance and encouraging parents to prevent children from working in gold mines. It also distributed educational materials to children in at least 15 schools. (6)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Cameroon.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (6)

During the reporting year, the government made efforts to enhance educational access across the country. As part of the Support Program for the Reform of Education in Cameroon, the government distributed 1,803,906 free textbooks to students at 13,000 primary schools. (6) In addition, the Government of Cameroon recruited and assigned 3,000 new teachers at primary schools across the country. (6) Although the government has implemented programs to improve education access and address child labor in mining, street work, and cocoa production, research suggests that the scope of current programs is insufficient to address the extent of the problem due to limited resources and insufficient geographic coverage. (3)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Cameroon (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for compulsory education from 12 to 14 so it is consistent with the minimum age for admission to work.	2009 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the use of children for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws prohibiting child trafficking do not require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be considered child trafficking, and that all children under age 18 are protected.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include work at dangerous heights and underwater.	2014 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on labor inspectorate funding.	2021 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism for the Ministry of Labor and Social Security to receive child labor complaints.	2021 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 224 to 772 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 11.6 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient funding, including for transportation, to carry out its mission.	2009 – 2022
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by conducting inspections in all sectors, including the mining sector and the informal sector.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement receive adequate training and funding to investigate cases of the worst forms of child labor.	2022
	Collect and publish comprehensive statistics on criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of investigations, the number of prosecutions, the number of convictions, and whether penalties were imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Referral System and Standard Operating Procedures work effectively to coordinate the identification and assistance of human trafficking victims.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Committee to Combat Child Labor receives sufficient resources to carry out its stated mandates.	2014 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that internally displaced and refugee children have access to education and ensure that schools remain free from violence and are not appropriated for other purposes.	2018 – 2022
	Take measures to increase birth registration and expand access to identity documents to ensure children have access to education and other social protection mechanisms.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that children are able to access education by eliminating or defraying the cost of informal school fees, books, and uniforms.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the number of schools, teachers, and sanitation facilities are adequate throughout the country.	2009 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem in Cameroon.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, the Central African Republic made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed and ratified a Trafficking in Persons Law, which creates a prosecutorial framework specifically for trafficking offenses, and establishes broad protections and services for trafficking victims, regardless of their immigration status. In addition, the government issued a circular to help prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The government also established a National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Children, which includes a specific focus on preventing children from being recruited and used in conflict. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, the Central African Republic is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement practices that delay advancement to eliminate child labor.



Government security forces used children in support roles at isolated checkpoints during the reporting period in violation of national law. The government also coordinated with an armed group that recruited and used children in armed conflict, and some children accused of aiding armed groups were detained, although the government eventually released them in December. Children in the Central African Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use in armed conflict, and forced labor in diamond mining. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and domestic work. The government did not publish complete data on its civil and criminal child labor law enforcement efforts in 2022, and enforcement agencies are understaffed and underfunded. Lastly, the Central African Republic lacks both a coordinating body and policies that address all relevant forms of child labor.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Central African Republic. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	30.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	39.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		54.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018–2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working in agriculture, including handling fertilizers and pesticide† (3,4)
	Working in forestry, including carrying tools (5)
	Fishing (3,4)
Industry	Diamond and gold mining,† quarrying† (3-7)
	Working in sawmills,† including sharpening sawblades (5)
	Construction (5)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work (3,8)
	Street work, including vending, portage, loading and unloading vehicles (3-7,9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Recruitment of children by state security forces for use in armed conflict as combatants and in support roles, and by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including as combatants, cooks, porters, informants, domestic workers, and for sexual exploitation (3,4,10-12)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, vending, and mining, including in artisanal diamond and gold mines (3,4,10)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as the result of trafficking (3-6,10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children in the Central African Republic (CAR) are subjected to recruitment and use by state and non-state armed groups. (4,11,12) In 2019, the government and 14 armed groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR), which called for the immediate cessation of recruitment of child soldiers by all parties involved in the conflict. (13,14) However, an attempt by six of those armed groups to overthrow the government following the December 2020 elections stalled implementation of the APPR. (3,5,8,9,15) During the reporting period, anti-Balaka-affiliated armed groups and ex-Séléka factions—including Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation; Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance; Union of Patriots for Change; and the Lord’s Resistance Army—recruited and used children as combatants, informants, messengers, cooks, and porters. (4,10,12) The United Nations verified a total of 134 children were recruited and used during the reporting period by all parties in the conflict, including the pro-government Kremlin-backed Wagner Group forces, the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), and several other armed groups. While these other armed groups committed a majority of the verified violations, government and pro-government forces were found to be responsible for 46 violations, including using children to cook, operate checkpoints, and run errands. (4,5,12)

Armed groups and criminal elements, including some pastoralist groups, subjected children to forced domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. (9,10,16) In some instances, relatives or family friends exploited children to generate additional income. (3,9) Girls may be trafficked into forced domestic work. In *maisons de joie*, girls as young as age 13 are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation. *Maisons de joie* are typically private residences at which alcohol and food are served to middle and upper-class customers. (3,6,10) Furthermore, children in rural areas are forced to work in diamond and gold mines, often for long hours and without protective equipment. Children working in mines are sometimes exploited by armed groups and are often exposed to harmful substances, including hazardous chemicals such as silver nitrate and mercury, and may suffer from injuries and waterborne diseases. (3-5,8,10)

Fewer than 60 percent of children in the Central African Republic complete their primary school education, and only 6 percent graduate from secondary school. (17) Violence and insecurity exacerbate barriers to education access, particularly for girls. (3,11,18,19) Although state security forces have extended their presence through most of the national territory since 2021, schooling is disrupted and schools often closed outside the capital by frequent clashes between CAR’s warring parties. (4,5) Other barriers to education include displacement due to conflict, and the occupation of some school buildings by armed groups, including the Kremlin-backed Wagner forces. (4,12) Children also continue to experience difficulties accessing education due to school fees, shortages of basic infrastructure, an absence of teachers, security concerns, and destruction or looting of school materials and buildings by armed groups. (4,10,11,20,21) Due to insecurity, conflict, and limited resources, the government has failed to fully implement a provision of the 2020 Child Protection Code (CPE) to provide free birth registration for all children, and many municipal governments continue to levy fees on birth registration and other vital records. (4,22) Moreover, reporting suggests that members of CAR’s minority Muslim population and people with names perceived to be Muslim faced discrimination and higher fees when trying to obtain new or replacement identification documents, leaving Muslim children more likely to be undocumented and unable

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

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to enroll in school. (4,5) Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education has attempted to improve access to education by waiving school entrance exam fees for children affected by conflict, and expanding programs to provide birth registration, as identification is required for school enrollment. (4,23)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Central African Republic has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 389–394 of the Labor Code; Article 61 of the Child Protection Code (22,24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 263 of the Labor Code; Articles 63–66 of the Child Protection Code (22,24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 261 of the Labor Code; Article 190 of the Mining Code; Order on Hazardous Child Labor (24-26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 7 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 63 and 173 of the Child Protection Code (22,24)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 151 of the Penal Code, Articles 3, 5–10, 15, and 44 of Law on Combatting Human Trafficking (27,28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 262, 263, and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 90–92 and 111 of the Penal Code; Articles 63 and 67 of the Child Protection Code (22,24,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 262, 263, and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 63 and 173 of the Child Protection Code (22,24)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Decree N° 85.432, Declaration to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict (29)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code; Article 75 of the Child Protection Code (22,24)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 262 and 393 of the Labor Code; Articles 75 and 179 of the Child Protection Code (22,24)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 9 of the Constitution; Articles 37 and 49 of the Child Protection Code (22,30)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 9 of the Constitution; Articles 49 and 54 of the Child Protection Code (22,30)

* Country has no conscription (5)

In September 2022, the President ratified a Trafficking in Persons Law, which was passed by the National Assembly in August of the same year. The law provides a prosecutorial framework with punitive action for

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violations of the law by individuals and entities, broad protections for trafficking victims to ensure they are not prosecuted themselves, regardless of their immigration status, and additional protections and services for child survivors. (4,28,31,32) In an effort to eliminate the use of children in support roles by armed groups, the Ministry of Defense issued a circular banning children from military facilities, and warning officers of sanctions for violations. (5,31,33,34)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Monitors and enforces laws related to child labor through its General Directorate of Labor and Social Welfare, and the seven regional labor directorates. (3,24)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Oversees Juvenile Court, established under the 2020 Child Protection Code (CPE) to field all cases involving the health, safety, morals, and education of children. Maintains sole jurisdiction over criminal cases involving juvenile plaintiffs, defendants, witnesses, and victims of crime, including former child soldiers. (22) Oversees a special police unit for children, which is responsible for monitoring children's safety and welfare in large cities, and industrial or mining areas. (22,30) This unit is also responsible for recording criminal offenses against children. The judges are responsible for working with the police, the Child Protection Unit, the Children's Prosecutor, and social workers to refer child victims and monitor compliance with diversion measures. (22,24)
Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence to Women and Children (UMIRR)	Aims to put a stop to sexual violence against women and children, including child trafficking. Interagency law enforcement unit that includes representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs; MOJ; the Ministry of Public Security; law enforcement (gendarmerie and police); and social workers. (3,4,16,23,35) Operates a 24-hour hotline to report cases of violence against women, and provides social services to survivors of human trafficking. (3,4,35) Operates in Bangui, the capital city, and Bouar, a town in the northwestern part of the country. (31,35) Falls under the joint authority of MOJ and the Ministry of Public Security, and is part of a state organization supporting investigations into conflict-related sexual violence. (16,36,37)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in the Central African Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,727 (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	167 (3)	167 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	10 (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	No (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	N/A (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (4)

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The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts, including labor inspectorate funding, number and type of inspections, number of violations found, penalties imposed and collected. However, reporting suggests that the number of inspections conducted during the reporting period was insufficient. (4) Insecurity, as well as inadequate financial and material resources, including transportation and fuel, office facilities and supplies, and technology, hindered the government's efforts to conduct inspections and address child labor. (3,4,23,38) In addition, inspectors may be provided transportation by employers, which threatens the impartiality and independence of inspections. (38)

Moreover, the passage of Decree No. 12.177 in 2012 effectively removed regional labor directorates from the general directorate's chain of command, resulting in regional directorates no longer being required to submit periodic reports on inspection activities, as required under ILO C. 81. (39) In addition, labor inspectors do not always issue formal penalties or sanctions. Instead, the conciliation of labor disputes makes up a significant part of inspectors' work. (9,24,38) The Ministry of Labor (MOL) works with other ministries and UNICEF to provide assistance to survivors of child labor, including its worst forms. However, due to a lack of resources, NGOs and UN bodies, such as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) and UNICEF, provide most of the social services available to survivors. (4,40,41)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Central African Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including detaining children who were subjected to the worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4,5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	1 (3)	Unknown (4,5)
Number of Convictions	1 (3)	Unknown (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (3)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (4)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report, including the number of investigations, number of prosecutions, number of convictions, and penalties imposed. (4) During the reporting period, officers in the Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence to Women and Children (UMIRR) received training on new standard operating procedures (SOPs) to identify trafficking cases and refer survivors to assistance services. In August 2022, Focal Point for Child Protection delivered a trafficking in persons training series at three military installations. (31) Among training participants were customs officers and migration and border security agents. One session was also attended by senior members of the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group in CAR. (5,31) The government also held training sessions on child trafficking and child labor in conflict zones for senior law enforcement and security forces. During the reporting period, UMIRR responded to several cases of human rights violations involving children, which were reported as a result of calls to its 24-hour hotline. (4) In November 2022, UMIRR also collaborated with Wagner forces and the International Committee of the Red Cross to repatriate a group of Cameroonian migrant children in CAR, who had been kidnapped by an armed group and forced to work at a rebel camp. (5,31,42)

During the reporting period, some children accused of aiding armed groups were detained in facilities for incarcerated adults. (4,5) In December of 2022 all remaining children who had been detained for aiding armed groups were released following a presidential clemency decree. (4,5,12,31,43) Reporting suggests that the released children were accused of working for armed groups at checkpoints, securing mining sites, running errands, and as child soldiers. The government worked with UNICEF to reintegrate the children by providing access to community care centers and foster homes or returning the children to their families. (4,31) While the government has a referral mechanism for authorities and social services to refer children found to be subjected

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to the worst forms of child labor, due to resource constraints, NGOs and UN agencies were the primary actors involved in monitoring and managing such cases. Government authority and enforcement capacity remains constrained in remote areas of the country. (4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coordinating mechanisms that address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Interministerial Committee to Combat Human Trafficking	Coordinates drafting and implementation of the Central African Republic's National Trafficking in Persons Strategy and the National Action Plan to Address Trafficking, acting as an interministerial working group under the authority of the President. Includes a Coordination Office led by the President and includes representatives from key ministries, including MOL. (28,31,32) Promoted the adoption of the 2022 Human Trafficking Law, encouraged MOJ officials to pursue trafficking in persons prosecutions, organized trainings and public awareness campaigns. During the reporting period, the National Committee met twice monthly, and the Coordination Office members met twice weekly. (31)

While the government has established a key mechanism that addresses human trafficking, these efforts do not extend to other worst forms of child labor and other sectors, such as mining, agriculture, and domestic work, in which child labor is prevalent. (3,44)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coverage of all forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR)	Peace agreement signed by 14 armed groups and the Transitional Government in February 2019. Includes provisions to end the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, and to facilitate the separation of children from their ranks. (14,40,41) Armed groups listed by the UN for grave violations against children have signed Action Plans to implement these commitments. (45-47) Action Plans cover the four areas for which the groups are listed, including: (1) recruitment and use of children; (2) killing and maiming; (3) rape and other forms of sexual violence; and (4) attacks on schools and hospitals. (45-47) The Central African Patriotic Movement has appointed four commanders to serve as child protection focal points in areas under its control. (40,45) However, MINUSCA reported that armed groups continued to recruit child soldiers during the reporting period. (4,12,34,48) Research was unable to determine what activities were undertaken as part of this policy during the reporting year, or to identify published results of these activities.
Child Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Policy	Based on the 2015 Bangui Forum, aims to facilitate initiatives to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate child soldiers, in cooperation with UN agencies, other ministries, and armed groups. (9) Through its National Strategy for Community-Based Reintegration of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups, provides temporary care to children separated from armed groups, and establishes Community Child Protection Networks. (9,49,50) With the assistance of UNICEF and other partner organizations, the Office of the Presidency also works to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate children used in armed conflict back into community life, through the Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation coordinating body. (35) During the reporting period, the government worked with NGOs to provide community reintegration support and established a vocational training center in Ouaka Prefecture for conflict-affected children. (4,12,31)
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Children†	Adopted in April 2022, establishes provisions to counter child trafficking, with a specific focus on preventing children from being recruited and used in conflict. (4,51,52) Includes awareness-raising programs for both the public and military forces, specialized training for FACA members, and a communication channel for officials to share information about the use of children in armed conflict and draw attention to potentially problematic situations. Provides for assistance to children previously associated with armed forces and their families to prevent revictimization, including through economic and education opportunities. (5,52)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period. (5,52)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (4)

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In 2022, the government established a Multi-year National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Sexual Violence/ Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, which includes initiatives to raise awareness about child labor among regional leadership. (4) During the reporting period, violence hindered the ability of the government to implement existing policies throughout its territory. (4,31) Research found no evidence of a policy on other forms of child labor, such as in the mining, agriculture, or domestic work sectors.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Programs	Coordinate the removal of children from forced labor situations, in partnership with NGOs, and provide necessary social services for their rehabilitation, enrollment in schools or vocational training programs, and placement in stable homes. Provide basic education and vocational skills training to children who are most at risk for child labor exploitation and armed group recruitment. (4,9,53) Support shelters that provide immediate care, food, and psychosocial support to vulnerable children and former child soldiers, including through the Shelters for Unaccompanied Children program. (4,54) During the reporting period, worked with the government to provide community reintegration support to children released from armed groups, and undertook a fact-finding survey, in conjunction with NGOs, to collect information on child labor throughout the country to inform future assistance programs. (4,53) In July 2022, established an annual work plan with the government focusing on actions related to the protection of children, including addressing the worst forms of child labor and social protections. (32)
War Child, Reintegration Support for Victims of Child Labor Exploitation	Conducts community-based reintegration programs for survivors of the worst forms of child labor, reaching 689 children during the reporting period. (4) Mobilizes community-based child protection committees, and provides mental health services to children affected by armed conflict. (55)
Birth Registration Campaign†	Aims to provide birth registration to children in the Central African Republic in accordance with the Child Protection Code. During the reporting year, local authorities, with support from UNICEF, used "mobile courts" at several prefectures to issue the documentation necessary for school attendance. (3,4) The campaigns reached 11,173 children during the reporting period. (4,53)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is partially funded by the Government of the Central African Republic.

While the government conducted several outreach efforts during the reporting period to educate local leaders and families about the dangers of child labor and the importance of attending school, research indicated that a lack of sufficient resources significantly hindered its ability to support programmatic efforts to address child labor. (3,4) Coordination with non-government actors to support children used in armed conflict and the scope of programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including the reintegration of children who were recruited for use in armed conflict. (11,23,56)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the Central African Republic (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient financial and material resources, including transportation, office facilities and supplies, and computers, to enforce child labor laws, in particular in urban centers.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that inspectors use their own transportation rather than accepting transportation from employers to ensure impartiality of inspections.	2022
	Publish complete labor law enforcement data, including labor inspectorate funding, number and type of inspections conducted, number of child labor violations found, number of violations for which penalties were imposed, and number for which penalties were collected.	2021 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish complete criminal law enforcement data, including the number of investigations, number of prosecutions, number of convictions, and penalties imposed.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that regional labor inspection offices are under the supervision and control of a central authority, and that regional directorates submit periodic reports on inspection activities.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections, including unannounced inspections.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that formal penalties or sanctions are imposed for child labor law violations, rather than conciliation, as appropriate.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that referral mechanisms for children found in child labor situations are well-funded and fully operational.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that children used in armed conflict are not detained, including in facilities for incarcerated adults, and continue to be granted access to social services providers and humanitarian assistance.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that judicial and criminal law enforcement officials receive sufficient funding and training and ensure that citizens can report violations and access formal judicial processes throughout the country.	2016 – 2022
Coordination	Establish a coordinating mechanism that addresses all forms of child labor, including in mining, agriculture, and domestic work.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, including in mining, agriculture, and domestic work.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation uphold their commitments, cease the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, and publish efforts to implement the agreement on an annual basis.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Improve access to education for all children, regardless of IDP status or religious affiliation, by eliminating school-related fees; making additional efforts to provide all children with birth registration; ensuring that religious minorities are not denied access to education; improving basic educational infrastructure throughout the country, including buildings and adequate furniture, sanitary facilities, teachers, and supplies; and ensuring that schools are safe spaces and free from armed groups.	2009 – 2022
	Expand programs to assist former child soldiers and children associated with armed groups, support their reintegration into society, and improve coordination among relevant actors.	2013 – 2022
	Allocate sufficient resources and implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and child labor in mining, throughout the country.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Chad made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund and the European Union to modernize the civil registry with the aim of increasing access to birth registration. In February 2022, the government also ratified the International Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. However, children in Chad are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in domestic work and cattle herding. The government did not provide sufficient data on law enforcement efforts and does not have policies or programs to address all worst forms of child labor in the country, including in commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Chad. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	45.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	39.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	27.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		44.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 6), 2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3)
	Production of charcoal (4)
	Herding livestock, including camels and cattle (3-7)
	Fishing, including catching, smoking, and selling fish (4,8,9)
Industry	Brickmaking (10)
	Carpentry (4)
	Gold mining† (4,9,11)
Services	Domestic work (4,5)
	Working in restaurants as barmaids and servers (3,4,7,12,13)
	Street work, including vending, garbage scavenging, and carrying heavy loads† (3,4,7,10)
	Begging† (4,5,9)
	Working as tailors and seamstresses (10)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Working in auto repair shops (3,4,7)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,8,9,14)
	Forced labor in agriculture, and herding cattle and camels (4,8,9)
	Forced labor in begging, domestic work, fishing, gold mining, charcoal production, and street vending (4,5,7-9,11,14,15)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (4,16)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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In the Lake Chad region, human trafficking networks exploit children in fisheries, and traffickers in rural areas sell children in markets for use in cattle or camel herding. (3,4,11,14) Human traffickers exploit children in forced labor as beggars in urban areas, agricultural laborers on farms, gold miners in the north of the country, laborers in charcoal production, and as domestic workers. (4,8,14) Child herders, some of whom are victims of forced labor, follow traditional routes for grazing cattle and may cross ill-defined borders across the Sahel. (8,14) Domestically, boys sent to Koranic schools, or *mouhadjirin*, may be forced to beg and surrender the money they receive to their teachers. (4,8,14,15) Girls travelling to larger towns in search of work may be subjected to commercial sexual exploitation or domestic servitude. (8) Children in Chad's refugee and IDP communities are also vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking due to their economic instability and lack of access to support systems. (8,14) During the reporting period, children in Chad were recruited by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict. (4,16) Furthermore, children were abducted and used for forced labor by terrorist groups Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province. (8)

Both the Constitution and the Law Orienting the Education System mandate free and compulsory education for all Chadian children who are citizens. (17,18) Chad was the first country in the region to integrate its network of refugee schools into the national education system; these schools are fully accredited and receive state funding. (19) Notwithstanding this positive development, Chad only guarantees education for children who are citizens or refugees, rather than for all under law. (17,18,20) While basic education is free by law, some schools require additional payment for textbooks and for supplemental fees. (3,4,21) Other barriers to education include shortages of schools, classrooms, and teachers. In addition, some schools do not offer all grade levels. (4) Girls also experience higher dropout rates than boys, and children with disabilities face barriers to school attendance. (22,23) In addition, poor access to birth registration documents hinders access to education in rural Chad. (4) During the reporting period, the government cooperated with UNICEF and the European Union to work toward modernizing the civil registry, including with the use of mobile phones, to help reduce the number of children lacking birth certificates. (4,24) In addition, a National Biometric Population Registry was established by ordinance in 2020 to centralize birth, death, identity, and other civil status records of residents and persons in transit through the Republic of Chad. However, research was unable to determine if the registry had been implemented in the reporting period. (4,25)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Chad has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

In February 2022, the government ratified the International Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. (8,9)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Chad's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibition against the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 52 of the Labor Code; Article 1 of the Decree Relating to Child Labor (26,27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 6 and 7 of the Decree Relating to Child Labor (26)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 6 and 10 of the Decree Relating to Child Labor; Articles 5, 19, and 22 of the President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons (26,28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 20 of the Constitution; Chapter 1, Article 5 of the Labor Code; Articles 5 and 15 of the President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons; Articles 292 (e), 292 (c), 327, 328, 330, and 331 of the Penal Code (18,27-29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 6.2, and 7.1 of the President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons; Articles 10, 330, and 331 of the Penal Code (28,29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 335, 336(a), 362, 364, 443, and 446 of the Penal Code; Articles 81–85 of the Law on Cyber Security and Fight Against Cyber Criminality; Articles 5, 16, and 22 of the President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons (28-30)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 32 of the Law on the Organization of the Armed Forces; Article 1 of the Ordinance Prohibiting the Use of Children in Armed Conflict; Article 52 of Military Statute N° 006/PR/06; Article 5 of the President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons; Articles 10, 286 (cc), 288 (g), and 370 of the Penal Code (28,29,31-33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 32 of the Law on the Organization of the Armed Forces; Article 22 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; Articles 5, 18, and 22 of the President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons; Articles 10, 286 (cc), 288 (g), and 370 of the Penal Code (28,29,31,34)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 1 of the Ordinance Prohibiting the Use of Children in Armed Conflict; Articles 5, 18, and 22 of the President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons; Articles 10, 286 (cc), 288 (g), and 370 of the Penal Code (28,29,32)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16‡	Articles 21, 23, 25, and 28 of the Law Orienting the Education System; Article 35 of the Constitution (17,18)
Free Public Education	No		Article 9 of the Law Orienting the Education System; Article 35 of the Constitution (17,18)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (17)

Chad lacks a specific legal prohibition on children being used, offered, or procured for illicit activities. (4) Furthermore, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before completion of compulsory education. (15-18,26,27) Lastly, while Chad's laws provide for free basic education for citizens and refugees, they do not meet the international standard because they do not cover foreign-born children without refugee status. (18,20)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Public Service, Employment, and Social Dialogue (MOPS)	Oversees Chad's labor inspectorate and enforces child labor laws. (12) Administers a directorate charged with addressing the worst forms of child labor, and maintains a specific point of contact to assist in coordinating child protection and human trafficking issues. (12)
Ministry of Justice, Human Rights, and Guardian of the Seal (MOJ)	Drafts and enforces laws and coordinates efforts to protect human rights. Through its Directorate for Protection and Legal Monitoring of Children, enforces laws related to child labor and child trafficking. (12,14)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
National Police's Child Protection Brigade (CPB)	Enforces and investigates allegations of child exploitation, including human trafficking and the worst forms of child labor. (3, 11, 14) Evacuates children to its headquarters in N'Djamena, from where they may be moved to Ministry of Women and Childhood Protection (MWCP) temporary shelters in Koundoul. (12) Includes 100 "focal points" spread throughout all 23 provinces. These focal points are not trained investigators, but they are responsible for coordinating investigations with hub offices and referring allegations to investigators. (3, 4, 14) CPB is active in Chad's largest cities (N'Djamena, Moundou, Sarh, Mongo, Mao, and Abéché). (14) CPB or other local authorities notify MOJ's Directorate for Protection and Legal Monitoring of Children, UNICEF, and local NGOs when there is a case of child trafficking or abuse. (14) Allegations may be submitted directly by the public or by MWCP, MOPS, or MOJ. The government's regional child protection technical committees also identify and refer child trafficking survivors to CPB. (3) During the reporting period, began operating out of a UNICEF-funded headquarters in N'Djamena, which hosts the coordinating service between CPB, MWCP, MOPS, and MOJ. (4)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Chad took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of sufficient resources, funding, and administrative capacity.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	36 (3)	36 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	No (4,7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (4)

The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report, including labor inspectorate funding, inspector training on child labor, the number and type of inspections conducted, whether violations were found, penalties imposed, and fees collected. (4) Research indicates that Chad does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (4,35,36) In addition, the government does not maintain a central database for routine inspections, including child labor violations. (4) Furthermore, while a complaint mechanism exists for the public to report suspected child labor violations to be addressed by the Child Protection Brigade, this mechanism is not well known or frequently used. (4)

Labor inspectors lacked sufficient resources, including equipment, transportation, and fuel, to conduct investigations outside the city in which they are based. The ability to conduct inspections is also constrained by limitations in both administrative capacity and funding. (4) Research indicates that the informal sector, which employs the most children in Chad, is also largely unmonitored. (3,5,7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Chad took actions to address child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (3)	Yes (4)

The government does not maintain a centralized criminal records database. All criminal records are handwritten, and hard copies are stored at courts and regional tribunals. (4) As a result, the government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report, including whether training was provided for criminal investigators and the number of criminal investigations conducted, violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions made, and penalties imposed. (4) In addition, many judicial officials remain unaware of Chad's laws on trafficking in persons, including the 2018 President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons. (9,14) However, the IOM trained 48 judicial authorities and members of security forces in Tibesti and 51 persons in Batha on the identification, referral, and protection components of the national anti-human trafficking law during the reporting period. (4,37)

In collaboration with UNICEF and the Ministry of Women and Childhood Protection, civil society organizations typically assist with providing temporary shelter, legal assistance, and family reintegration services to trafficking survivors. (9,11) Resource constraints, including lack of electricity and internet at judicial facilities and erratic and insufficient funding allocations, pose barriers to criminal investigation and prosecution. (3,4,9,11) Corruption is also a concern. Reporting indicates that high-ranking military officials, who profit from human trafficking, may impede the implementation of anti-trafficking measures and that security forces sometimes interfere in attempts to prosecute suspected traffickers through intimidation. (9)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Working Group on the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinates government efforts to address the worst forms of child labor, provides training to enforcement personnel, and conducts awareness-raising activities. Chaired by MWCP Child Protection Directorate and includes representatives from four other ministries, including MOPS. (3) Research was unable to determine whether the working group was active during the reporting period, and whether it received funding to carry out its mandate. (4)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of existing policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Road Map to Implement the President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons	Adopted in 2019, with the ultimate goal of implementing a National Action Plan. Coordinates interagency enforcement of the 2018 President's Ordinance on Trafficking in Persons. (4) Includes provisions for training members of the courts, local authorities, traditional and religious leaders, members of civil society, and members of enforcement agencies. (4) Components of this policy relating to child labor were inactive during the reporting period. (7)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (4,7)

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Although Chad has a policy to address human trafficking, research could not find whether it had a policy to address all worst forms of child labor in the country. (9)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Refugees and Host Communities Support (2018–2025)	\$60 million World Bank-funded project to improve access to health and education services for refugees and host communities by rehabilitating and constructing primary schools. (3,38,39) During the reporting period, cash transfers reached an additional 45,000 participants (80 percent of whom were women), and there were an additional 5,250 students (50 percent of whom were female) attending new or rehabilitated schools. (38,40)
UNICEF Programs	Multifaceted humanitarian action targeting children, including refugees and internally displaced children in Chad. Includes interventions in education, healthcare, nutrition, and other areas of basic need. (41) Through its \$21 million Education Cannot Wait (2020–2023) program, supports education for 446,744 at-risk children. (4,42) The program was developed under the Ministry of National Education's Transitional Education Plan, Program to Strengthen Literacy, Humanitarian Response Plan, and Education Cluster Strategy. (43,44) Interventions include early childhood education, in addition to non-formal education and literacy programs for out-of-school adolescent children (ages 9 to 14). (43,44)
WFP Strategic Plan (2019–2023)	Aims to provide food security and educational outcomes in Chad among crisis-affected and vulnerable populations. (4,45,46) Seeks to promote resilient livelihoods and sustainable food systems. Prioritizes strengthening national institutions to manage food security and coordinating cooperation with humanitarian and development partners in Chad. (45) Through joint initiatives Breaking Barriers to Girls' Education and Education Cannot Wait, provides meals to school children. (46,47) During the reporting period, provided unconditional food assistance and cash transfers to 2.1 million crisis-affected people, supported 232,200 children and school staff in school-based programs, and reached 138,600 people through asset creation and livelihood programs. (48)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

Although Chad has programs that target child labor, they do not address all relevant forms of child labor, particularly regarding the use of child labor in herding cattle, forced child labor in domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation. (3,4,14,49)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Chad (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws specifically prohibit children from being used, offered, or procured for illicit activities.	2011 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that laws providing free basic education include all children in Chad, including non-citizens.	2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the role of the Child Protection Brigade's child trafficking and child labor complaint mechanism is well-known and understood by the public.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate provides inspectors with sufficient resources—including training, transportation, and budget allocations—to conduct inspections in both the formal and informal sectors.	2014 – 2022
	Collect, store, and publish data on law enforcement efforts in a central database, including information about labor inspectorate funding, the number and type of inspections conducted, whether violations were found, penalties imposed, and fees collected, and whether criminal investigators received training, the number of criminal investigations conducted, violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and penalties imposed.	2014 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 36 to 139 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2012 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies are sufficiently funded, have sufficient access to electricity and internet at judicial facilities, that law enforcement officers are trained, and that existing penalties are enforced according to the law.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the judicial system receives sufficient resources, including training and funding for infrastructure, to effectively prosecute cases and manage data on the worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that judges continue to prosecute child labor offenses to the full extent of the law and that officials who interfere with legal mechanisms and processes are penalized.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Working Group on the Worst Forms of Child Labor is active and receives adequate resources to carry out its mandate.	2014 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy to address all relevant worst forms of child labor in Chad, including human trafficking.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor during the reporting period and that data on these activities are published.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure access to education for all children by eliminating school-related fees; increasing the number of schools, grade levels, classrooms, and teachers available throughout the country; implementing programs to increase enrollment of girls; and providing accommodations for students with disabilities.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that all children are issued birth certificates, which may be required for school enrollment.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Biometric Population Registry receives adequate funding and is implemented as intended.	2016 – 2022
	Establish or expand programs to provide services to children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, such as forced child labor in herding cattle, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2022
	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in agriculture to inform policies and programs.	2022

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In 2022, Chile made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Chile passed laws that specifically prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, raised the maximum prison sentences for those guilty of committing child trafficking crimes, and guaranteed the rights of children to be protected from economic exploitation. The Ministerial Advisory Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Working Adolescents held several meetings on inspection guidelines for the labor directorate, which resulted in the creation of a manual and training modules on child labor and migration for enforcement personnel. In addition, Chile participated in the Alliance 8.7 Strategic Workshop as a Pioneer Country to renew its roadmap for attaining sustainable development goal 8.7. However, children in Chile are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children are also subjected to involvement in the production and trafficking of drugs. Furthermore, migrant children face significant barriers to education, including discrimination and a lack of transportation and access to educational settings. There is also a lack of adequate shelters for child survivors of trafficking in persons.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Chile.

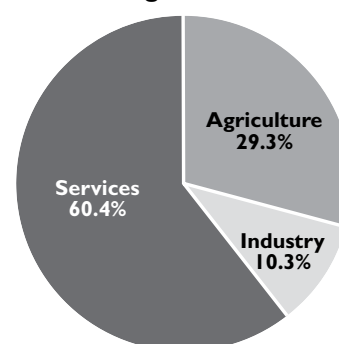
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.8 (94,025)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	99.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		101.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta de Actividades de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes (Simpoc), 2012. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Livestock rearing (3)
	Forestry, † activities unknown (3,4)
	Hunting, † activities unknown (4)
	Fishing, † activities unknown (3,4)
Industry	Construction, † bricklaying, † and carpentry † (2,4,5)
Services	Domestic work (3,4,6)
	Working in retail, hospitality, corner stores, offices, restaurants, and bars † (3,5-8)
	Garbage collection, † and street cleaning (5)
	Street work, † including street vending (7)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including in the production, selling, and distribution of drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,6,7,9,10)
	Forced labor in agriculture, mining, construction, street vending, domestic work, and garment and hospitality sectors (9,11,12)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, including in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,9-13)
	Forced domestic work (13)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.







‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children from indigenous and migrant communities are especially vulnerable to human trafficking for labor exploitation in Chile. (12) Children are also involved in street work, including the selling of goods. (7) While education is compulsory through secondary school, some educational barriers do exist in Chile, including the lack of transportation to schools in rural areas and discrimination in educational settings, specifically for migrant children. (3,6,14,15)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Chile has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Articles 13 and 17 of the Labor Code (16)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 13, 14, and 18 of the Labor Code (16)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 14–18 of the Labor Code; Decree 1 (16-19)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 19, No. 2 of the Constitution; Article 2 of the Labor Code; Article 411 of the Penal Code (16,20-22)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 411 of the Penal Code (21)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 366, 367, and 411 of the Penal Code; Law No. 20.594 (21,23,24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 72 of the Penal Code; Law 21.444 (25,26)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Chapter I, Article 32 of the Armed Forces Recruitment and Mobilization Law No. 2.306 (27)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Chapter I, Article 13 of the Armed Forces Recruitment and Mobilization Law No. 2.306 (27)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 26 of Law No. 20.357 (28)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Articles 4, 25, and 27 of the General Education Law No. 20.370 (15)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 4 of the General Education Law No. 20.370 (15)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (15)

In 2022, the Chilean government amended the Penal Code to fully prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. (25,26,29) Chile also made updates to its criminal code by promulgating Law 21.522, which replaced the term "child prostitution" with "commercial sexual exploitation of a person under the age of 18," and included a minimum sentencing of 5 to 10 years for perpetrators of this crime, with sentencing as high as 20 years if the minor is personally or economically dependent on the perpetrator. (12,13,30) In addition, the government promulgated Law 21.523, which increased the maximum prison sentence for child trafficking to between 10 to 20 years. (12,13,31) Chile also passed Law 21.430 on Guaranteed Rights and Protections for Children and Adolescents, which establishes the right of minors to be protected from economic exploitation, sexual exploitation, and child labor. (12,13,32)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MINTRAB)	Designs and implements national strategies on child labor and generates awareness on child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. (6) Enforces child labor laws, coordinating with the Better Childhood Service and the Department of Fundamental Rights. (13,33) During the reporting period, Chile replaced the Department for the Eradication of Child Labor with the Department of Fundamental Rights. The Department of Fundamental Rights is responsible for eradicating child labor and forced labor, as well as addressing labor issues pertaining to migration and people with disabilities. (13) As of 2021, the Undersecretary of Labor within MINTRAB chairs the Ministerial Advisory Commission for the Implementation of the Protocol (ILO C029) on forced labor. The Commission is made up of actors whose knowledge and experience are used to advise the Undersecretary of Labor on the limitations that may hinder implementation of the protocol. (8,34)
Ministry of the Interior	Oversees the National Investigations Police (PDI) and the National Uniformed Police (<i>Carabineros</i>). (13) Both agencies are tasked with investigating and preventing child labor violations and the worst forms of child labor. (35) Within PDI, the Brigade to Investigate Trafficking in Persons investigates trafficking of children, modern slavery, and organized crime. (35,36) The Sexual Assault Victim Care Center provides support to child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. (35) Within the National Uniformed Police, the Directorate for Family Protection provides special orientation on policies and operating plans for detection of commercial sexual exploitation of children. (3)
National Prosecutor's Office (<i>Fiscalía Nacional</i>)	Conducts criminal investigations and prosecutes crimes related to the worst forms of child labor. Trains and coordinates with interagency partners, including PDI, <i>Carabineros</i> , and regional and local prosecutor's offices. (3,37)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Chile took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$74,000,000 (37)	\$9,700,000 (13)
Number of Labor Inspectors	467 (37)	350 (13)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (16)	Yes (16)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (37)	Yes (13)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	78,050† (37)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	218 (37)	186 (13)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	218 (37)	172 (13)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	218 (37)	172 (13)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (13)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (13)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (8,16)	Yes (13,16)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (13)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (13)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (13)

† Data are from January 1, 2021, to January 31, 2022.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Chile took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including judges suspending or commuting sentences for those convicted of child commercial sexual exploitation crimes.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (13)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	509 (13)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	43 (13)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	25 (13)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (13)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (13)

During the reporting period, the government provided criminal law enforcement information for inclusion in this report.

In 2022, judges frequently suspended or commuted sentences of individuals convicted of commercial sexual exploitation of children, including human trafficking. (3,9) There is also a lack of adequate shelters for child survivors of trafficking in persons. (11)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Ministerial Advisory Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Working Adolescents (CETI)	Coordinates with the Department of Fundamental Rights on implementing the National Strategy for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Working Adolescent on the national and subnational levels. (13) During the reporting period, CETI held meetings on inspection guidelines for the labor directorate and conducted a survey of work activities for boys, girls, and adolescents, the results of which will be published in 2023. CETI also drafted a manual on child labor and migration with support from IOM, developed training modules for employees of the Better Childhood Service, and updated information about child labor on the government's website. (13)

During the reporting period, the Interagency Task Force on Child Labor and Migration began working on a study on the work of migrant children and adolescents in Chile, and results are expected to be published in 2023. (13)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Strategy for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Workers (2015–2025)	Establishes a strategy to eradicate child labor by combining efforts across national and regional agencies and private and public entities, and requiring regions to establish a strategy to address child labor issues in the area. (38) MINTRAB oversees the implementation of regional strategies, including the design and implementation of regional operating plans. MINTRAB continued implementing the national strategy during the reporting period. (13)
Third Action Plan against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents	Creates cooperation mechanisms for private and public institutions to collaborate on preventing and detecting commercial sexual exploitation of children and providing social services and rights restitution to survivors. (39) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement this plan.
National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking (2019–2022)	Prevents and addresses human trafficking, with a focus on women and children. Encompassed four strategic areas: prevention and awareness raising, prosecution, victims' assistance and protection, and inter-institutional cooperation and coordination. (40) The Intersectoral Roundtable on Trafficking in Persons developed the Action Plan in 2019, which was approved at the working level but is awaiting approval at the ministerial level. (36,41,42) The plan continued to guide member agencies' work in 2022, despite not being fully implemented. (12) The government plans to draft a new Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons in 2023. (12)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (43)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security attended the Alliance 8.7 workshop to renew the roadmap for attaining sustainable development goal 8.7. This goal seeks to eliminate child labor in all its forms by 2025. (13,44)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including a lack of shelters for survivors of human trafficking.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Better Childhood Service (<i>Mejor Niñez</i>)	Operates under the Ministry of Social Development and Family, guaranteeing the protection of vulnerable children and adolescents, particularly those living on the streets, and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, in coordination with the Department of Child Labor Eradication. (37,45) Also coordinates with Local Offices of Childhood (<i>Oficinas Locales de la Niñez</i>), referring cases of children whose rights have been violated to appropriate social services and monitoring cases of the worst forms of child labor. These offices are located in municipalities throughout the country and are part of the larger social protection network overseen by Better Childhood Service. (45,46) During the reporting period, Better Childhood conducted activities in 11 regions across Chile to assist with its Sexual Exploitation Program. The program is dedicated to addressing commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents by financing accredited collaborating. (12,47)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

Reports indicate that the absence of specialized shelters for male survivors of human trafficking remains a problem. (12)

During the reporting period, the National Service for Specialized Protection to Children and Adolescents, in conjunction with the Inter-American Institute, held a seminar on violence and commercial sexual exploitation. The seminar included discussions about new forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children in digital

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spaces, and the challenges in criminal prosecution and protection of survivors. (48) Additionally, the Development Subdirectorates of the National Service of Tourism created training for several members of the tourist industry on prevention, identifying, and acting in cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children. (49) The Ministry of Labor and Social Security also established partnerships with the private sector, in which they provided businesses, unions, and the general public with training on preventing the worst forms of child labor. (13)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Chile (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient vehicles to carry out their duties.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that cases related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children are prosecuted fully and that appropriate penalties are imposed on violators.	2016 – 2022
	Publish information on the number of labor inspections conducted at worksites.	2022
	Ensure that there are adequate shelters available for child victims of human trafficking.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that the National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking is approved at the ministerial level and implemented.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Third Action Plan against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and that information on these activities is made publicly available.	2022
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in forestry, hunting, and fishing to inform policies and programs.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that educational barriers, such as the lack of transportation to school in rural areas and discrimination of migrant children in educational settings, are addressed to prevent child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that male survivors of human trafficking have access to shelters and specialized services.	2022

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For the 2022 reporting period, no assessment has been made regarding Christmas Island's efforts to advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor because there is no evidence of a worst forms of child labor problem and the country has an adequate legal and enforcement framework on child labor. During the reporting period, the Work Health and Safety Act 2020 took effect, which increased protections for children 16 and 17 years old working in mines for the purposes of apprenticeships. In addition, the Government of Australia ratified the International Labor Organization Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention of 1930. In June 2023, the Government ratified the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), which will enter into force on June 13, 2024. Finally, the Government of Australia issued its annual report detailing efforts to carry out the Modern Slavery Act and continued to fund cash assistance programs.







I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that child labor exists on Christmas Island. (1)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Christmas Island is non-self-governing and is included as part of the territory of the Australian Commonwealth. (1-3) Under the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 (Cth), all laws of the Commonwealth are applicable to Christmas Island as if it were a part of mainland Australia. (3,4) The following Conventions have been extended to Christmas Island (Table 1).

Table 1. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

In April 2022, Australia ratified the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention 1930 (No. 29). (5) Australia also ratified the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) in June 2023, and the convention will enter into force on June 13, 2024. (6)

Christmas Island is subject to the laws and regulations related to child labor of the Commonwealth of Australia and the state of Western Australia. (1,2) The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 2).

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	17.5	Section 190 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CI); Section 29 of the School Education Act 1999 (WA) (CI) (7,8)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Part 7.1 Division 2 r.336 of the Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations; Section 634 of the Mines Health and Safety Act of 2020 (WA) (CI); Section 193 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CI) (7,9,10)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Applicant Guide – Application for a High Risk Work License; Section 634 of the Health and Safety (Mines) Regulations 2022 (WA) (CI) (10,11)

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Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 270.1–4, 270.6, and 270.7 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth); Sections 270.6, 270.7, and 271.9 of the Crimes Legislation Amendment Act 2013 (Cth) (12,13)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) (12)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 16–18 of the Prostitution Act 2000 (WA) (CI); Section 192 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CI); Section 217 of the Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 (WA) (CI) (7,14,15)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Divisions 309 and 310 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) (12)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Canberra Act 2600 (16)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Canberra Act 2600 (16)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Sections 268.68 and 268.88 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) (12)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17.5	Section 6 of the School Education Act 1999 (WA) (CI) (8)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 98 of the School Education Act 1999 (WA) (CI) (8)

* Country has no conscription (16)

The Government of Western Australia Work Health and Safety Act 2020 took effect on March 31, 2022. It, and its implementing mining regulations, increased protections for children between the ages of 16 and 18 working in mines under close supervision for the purposes of apprenticeships. (1,9,10)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the Government of Australia has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Western Australia Department of Communities	Enforces laws related to the minimum age for work through a Service Delivery Arrangement under which Australian Government services are provided on Christmas Island. (1)
Western Australia Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety	Enforces laws related to hazardous child labor and occupational safety and health through a Service Delivery Arrangement under which Australian Government services are provided on Christmas Island. (1)
Australian Federal Police	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (1,17) Oversee the Child Protection Operations Team, which coordinates and investigates online and multi-jurisdictional child sexual exploitation issues, including child pornography; and the Human Trafficking Teams, which investigate human trafficking for the purposes of transnational sexual and labor exploitation. (18)

Labor Law Enforcement

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for labor law enforcement actions to address child labor.

Criminal Law Enforcement

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for criminal law enforcement actions to address child labor.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for mechanisms to coordinate efforts to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Inter-Departmental Committee on Human Trafficking and Slavery	Deals with child labor law enforcement and policy, including the worst forms of child labor, from a counter-trafficking perspective. (1) Comprises 11 government agencies, including the Australian Federal Police, Department of Employment, and Department of Foreign Affairs, and is chaired by the Department of Home Affairs. (19,20) The Committee meets at least twice a year, including once at the ministerial level, and includes an Operational Working Group subcommittee that meets monthly and refers emerging policy issues for consideration. (1,21) The Committee was active in 2022 and took multiple steps to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery, including extensive consultations with countries, businesses, and civil society groups. (22)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established a policy related to child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2020–2025	Sets five strategic priorities for addressing modern slavery, which the National Action Plan defines as trafficking in persons, slavery, slavery-like practices, and the worst forms of child labor. Priorities include: (1) prevention; (2) disruption, investigation, and prosecution; (3) support and protection for victims; (4) partnerships; and (5) research. (1,23) In December 2022, the Australian Attorney General convened the fourteenth Ministerial Meeting of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, the government's key mechanism for consultation with civil society and industry stakeholders on modern slavery issues. (1)

In 2022, the Government of Australia issued its annual report detailing the previous year's activities related to the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act, which requires businesses and organizations with an annual turnover of \$70 million (AUD 100 million) or more to report on efforts made to reduce the risk of modern slavery, including the worst forms of child labor, in their supply chains. (1,24)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established social programs that include the goal of preventing child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Cash Assistance Programs	Child Care Subsidy Program provides support for the care of children ages 13 or younger using an approved childcare service, and the Parenting Program provides an income support payment for the principal caretakers of a child under age 8. (1)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, there are no actions needed to advance the continued prevention of child labor on Christmas Island.

Christmas Island

NO ASSESSMENT

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Cocos (Keeling) Islands

NO ASSESSMENT

For the 2022 reporting period, no assessment has been made regarding Cocos (Keeling) Islands' efforts to advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor because there is no evidence of a worst forms of child labor problem and the country has an adequate legal and enforcement framework on child labor. During the reporting period, the Work Health and Safety Act 2020 took effect, which increased protections for children 16 and 17 years old working in mines for the purposes of apprenticeships. In addition, the Government of Australia ratified the International Labor Organization Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention of 1930. In June 2023, the Government ratified the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), which will enter into force on June 13, 2024. Finally, the Government of Australia issued its annual report detailing efforts to carry out the Modern Slavery Act and continued to fund cash assistance programs.







I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that child labor exists in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. (1)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands are non-self-governing and are included as part of the territory of the Australian Commonwealth. (1-3) Under the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 (Cth), all laws of the Commonwealth are applicable to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands as if they were a part of mainland Australia. (2,4) The following Conventions have been extended to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (Table 1).

Table 1. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

In April 2022, Australia ratified the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention 1930 (No. 29). (1,5) Australia also ratified the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) in June 2023, and the convention will enter into force on June 13, 2024. (6)

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands are subject to the laws and regulations related to child labor of the Commonwealth of Australia and the state of Western Australia. The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 2).

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	17.5	Section 190 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CKI); Section 29 of the School Education Act 1999 (WA) (CKI) (7,8)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Part 7.1 Division 2 r.336 of the Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations; Section 634 of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Regulation 2022 (WA); Section 193 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CKI) (7,9,10)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Application for a High Risk Work License; Section 634 of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Regulation 2022 (WA) (10,11)

Cocos (Keeling) Islands

NO ASSESSMENT

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 270.1–4, 270.6, and 270.7 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth); Sections 270.6, 270.7, and 271.9 of the Crimes Legislation Amendment Act 2013 (Cth) (12,13)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) (12)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 16–18 of the Prostitution Act 2000 (WA) (CKI); Section 192 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CKI); Section 217 of the Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 (WA) (CKI) (7,14,15)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Divisions 309 and 310 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) (12)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Canberra Act 2600 (16)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Canberra Act 2600 (16)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Sections 268.68 and 268.88 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) (12)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17.5	Section 6 of the School Education Act (WA) (CKI) (8)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 98 of the School Education Act (WA) (CKI) (8)

* Country has no conscription (16)

The Government of Western Australia Work Health and Safety Act 2020 took effect on March 31, 2022. It, and its implementing mining regulations, increased protections for children between the ages of 16 and 18 working in mines under close supervision for the purposes of apprenticeships. (1,9,10)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the Government of Australia has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Western Australia Department of Communities	Enforces laws related to the minimum age for work through a Service Delivery Arrangement, under which Australian Government services are provided in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. (1)
Western Australia Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety	Enforces laws related to hazardous child labor and occupational safety and health through a Service Delivery Arrangement, under which Australian Government services are provided in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. (1)
Australian Federal Police	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (1,17) Oversee the Child Protection Operations Team, which coordinates and investigates online and multi-jurisdictional child sexual exploitation issues, including child pornography; and the Human Trafficking Teams, which investigate human trafficking for the purposes of transnational sexual and labor exploitation. (18)

Labor Law Enforcement

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for labor law enforcement actions to address child labor.

Criminal Law Enforcement

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for criminal law enforcement actions to address child labor.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for mechanisms to coordinate efforts to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Inter-Departmental Committee on Human Trafficking and Slavery	Deals with child labor law enforcement and policy, including the worst forms of child labor, from a counter-trafficking perspective. (1) Comprises 11 government agencies, including the Australian Federal Police, Department of Employment, and Department of Foreign Affairs, and is chaired by the Department of Home Affairs. (19,20) The Committee meets at least twice a year, including once at the ministerial level, and includes an Operational Working Group subcommittee that meets monthly and refers emerging policy issues for consideration. The Committee was active in 2022 and took multiple steps to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery, including extensive consultations with countries, businesses, and civil society groups. (21)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established a policy related to child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2020–2025	Sets five strategic priorities for addressing modern slavery, which the National Action Plan defines as trafficking in persons, slavery, slavery-like practices, and the worst forms of child labor. Priorities include: (1) prevention; (2) disruption, investigation, and prosecution; (3) support and protection for victims; (4) partnerships; and (5) research. (1,22) In December 2022, the Australian Attorney General convened the fourteenth Ministerial Meeting of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, the government's key mechanism for consultation with civil society and industry stakeholders on modern slavery issues. (1)

In 2022, the Government of Australia issued its annual report detailing the previous year's activities related to the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act, which requires businesses and organizations with an annual turnover of \$70 million (AUD 100 million) or more to report on the efforts made to reduce the risk of modern slavery, including the worst forms of child labor, in their supply chains. (1,23)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established social programs that include the goal of preventing child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Cash Assistance Programs	Child Care Subsidy Program provides support for the care of children ages 13 or younger using an approved childcare service, and the Parenting Program provides an income support payment for the principal caretakers of a child under age 8. (1)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, there are no actions needed to advance the continued prevention of child labor in Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Cocos (Keeling) Islands

NO ASSESSMENT

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In 2022, Colombia made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Through Law 2205, the government amended the Code of Criminal Procedure, which prioritizes and accelerates investigations into commercial sexual exploitation and the use of children in pornography by establishing a prosecution timeline for the Attorney General's Office. The government also increased the number of labor inspectors from 885 to 1,165, developed an elite group of inspectors to focus on child labor, and increased the capacity of labor inspectors to identify children at risk. Furthermore, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare established a 2023 Action Plan with Ecuadorian authorities to address child labor in illegal mining operations. Lastly, the government increased Venezuelan migrant children's enrollment in the education system by approximately 20 percent compared to the year prior. However, children in Colombia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. In addition, inadequate resource allocation for the labor inspectorate, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors, may impede government efforts to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. Finally, existing social programs are insufficient to address the scope of the worst forms of child labor in Colombia, including commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Colombia.

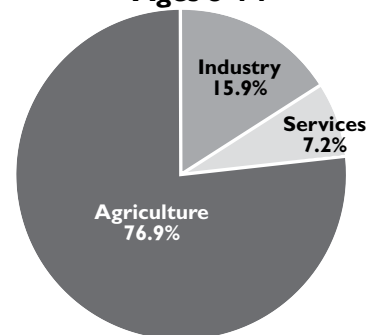
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	2.5 (196,518)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	91.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	2.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		104.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organizations' analysis of statistics from Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares, Módulo de Trabajo Infantil (GEIH-MTI), 2020. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of coffee, sugarcane,† cacao, pome and stone fruits, grapes, and unrefined brown sugar (panela) (3-7) Animal husbandry,† and fishing,† including conch and crab harvesting (4,5,8-10)
Industry	Mining† coal, emeralds, gold, tungsten, and coltan (3,5) Producing bricks (5,8,11)

Colombia

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Construction,† particularly of large-scale projects (5,8)
	Cutting and transporting wood,† and producing wood charcoal (3,12)
	Processing shrimp and langoustines† (9)
Services	Street work,† including vending and helping shoppers carry bags in urban markets,† begging,† and guarding cars and motorcycles† (3,5,13-17)
	Recycling† (5)
	Domestic work,† including caring for children,† cooking, gardening, and shopping for the home (5)
	Working in retail establishments, hotels, and restaurants (5,18)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,19,20)
	Use in the production of pornography (5,20)
	Forced street vending and forced begging (3,21,22)
	Use in illicit activities by illegal armed groups and criminal organizations, including committing homicides, extortions, trafficking drugs, and the production of marijuana and coca (stimulant plant), each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5,22,23)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (3,22,24)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In 2022, reports continued to indicate that the forced recruitment or use of minors in Colombia by illegal armed groups, including by the U.S.-designated terrorist organizations the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército Popular* or FARC-EP) and the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* or ELN), as well as by the Residual Organized Armed (*Grupos Armados Organizados Residuales* or GAOR), dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the *Clan del Golfo*, the Popular Liberation Army (*Ejército Popular de Liberación* or EPL) and criminal bands (*bandas criminales* or BACRIM) continued in 2022. (3,24,25) Armed groups, particularly in the departments of Cauca, Choco, Cordoba, Nariño, and Norte de Santander, typically recruit children to commit crimes such as producing and trafficking drugs, extortion, and serving as combatants and informants, as well as use children for commercial sexual exploitation. (3,21,22,24) In 2022, an international organization reported that 77 percent of municipalities in the department of Choco and 33 percent of municipalities in the department of Nariño were at high risk for child soldier recruitment, particularly indigenous and Afro-Colombian children. (21) According to the Coalition Against the Involvement of Children and Youth in the Armed Conflict in Colombia (*Coalición Contra la Vinculación de Niños, Niñas y Jóvenes al Conflicto Armado en Colombia*), illegal armed groups forcibly recruited or used 159 children in 66 cases during the reporting period. (21) Colombia’s 2016 Peace Accord with the FARC integrated special provisions known as the “Ethnic Chapter” to address the disproportionate harm Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities suffered during the 50-year conflict. High levels of violence persist in these communities, and ethnic community leaders report an increase in child recruitment by drug traffickers. (26,27)




Commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs more often in private homes rented online than in commercial establishments. Children are particularly vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation in areas with foreign tourism, in mining communities, and in areas with large construction projects. (5) Some children are reportedly recruited in schools, and members of sex trafficking rings conduct surveillance around schools in search of vulnerable girls. (5,8,9,28) In 2022, 114 child victims of sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, received shelter assistance from an NGO, mostly government-funded. (21) Traffickers exploit Colombian children working in the informal sector and street vending in forced labor. (21,22) Migrant and refugee Venezuelan children are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including in street work, commercial sexual exploitation, forced recruitment or use by non-state groups for armed conflict, and recruitment by organized criminal organizations. (21) While children under 18 are eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), migrant and refugee children face difficulties in obtaining TPS due to their adult guardians’ ineligibility and lack of familiarity, thereby increasing barriers to education access and vulnerability to child labor. (5,21,29)

Basic education is free and compulsory for all children up to age 18. However, children in rural and marginalized urban parts of the country face barriers to accessing education due to living long distances from school and a lack of adequate transportation, poor school infrastructure, and violence at school. (3,5,21,30) The government reported an increase of almost 20 percent of Venezuelan migrant children in Colombia's education system, up from 489,179 in 2021 to 586,971 in 2022. (3,21) The TPS program gives Venezuelans with irregular migration status up to 10 years to become residents, as well as access to health, social security, and financial systems. (31,32) Notably, this humanitarian measure also helps them overcome difficulties in accessing pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as training opportunities offered by the Colombian National Apprenticeship Service. (3)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Colombia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Colombia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a minimum age for work that is less than the compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 35 of the Child and Adolescence Code (33)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 117 of the Child and Adolescence Code (33)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 3 of Resolution 1796 (34)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 17 of the Constitution; Articles 141 and 188A of the Penal Code (35,36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 17 of the Constitution; Articles 188A–188C of the Penal Code; Law No. 2168 (35-37)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 213–219B of the Penal Code (36)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 162, 188D, and 384 of the Penal Code (36)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 81 of Law 1861 (38)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 4 of Law 1861 (38)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 162 of the Penal Code; Article 20 the Child and Adolescence Code; Article 14 of Law 418 (33,36,39)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Decree 4807 of 2011 (40)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 2.3.1.6.4.1 and 2.3.1.6.4.2 of Decree 1075; Article 1 of Decree 4807; Article 28 of the Child and Adolescence Code (33,40,41)

Colombia

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

In May 2022, Colombia passed Law 2205, which modified Article 175 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to prioritize and accelerate investigations into commercial sexual exploitation and the use of children in pornography by establishing a prosecution timeline for the Attorney General's Office. (3,21,42,43) As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Receives complaints of labor law violations and conducts labor inspections, including inspections to verify labor conditions for adolescent workers and compliance with other child labor provisions through its Inspection, Monitoring, Control, and Territorial Management Directorate. Also oversees the Internal Working Group on Child Labor Eradication. (9,44) Additionally, the Directorate of Fundamental Rights' Unit for Labor Protections operates the Comprehensive Child Labor Information System (SIRITI), a child labor monitoring system that identifies children engaged in or at risk of child labor. (3) MOL works closely with the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF), which provides services to children who have been engaged in child labor and assists in restoring their rights. (3)
National Police	Investigate cases of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking and have a Child Protection Police Unit. (9,45)
Attorney General's Office (AGO)	Investigates and prosecutes cases of child recruitment for use in armed conflict and illicit activities, commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, and human trafficking. With support from the Office's Technical Investigation Unit, advises the Attorney General in the design of policies and strategies related to the role of judicial police investigators. (3,9,33) Oversees the Articulation Group for Addressing Trafficking in Persons, which includes prosecutors, analysts, and judicial police engaged in addressing organized crime and human trafficking. (46) During the reporting period, it created a Special Unit for the Investigation of Prioritized Crimes Involving Children and Adolescents. (3,21,42,43)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Colombia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,400,000 (5)	\$1,255,755 (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	885 (5)	1,165 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (47)	Yes (47)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (5)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (5)	10 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (5)	1 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (47)	Yes (47)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	No (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (3)

In January 2022, the Government of Colombia approved the addition of 355 labor inspector positions through Decree 144, and the MOL subsequently hired 280 labor inspectors. (3) However, research indicates that Colombia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. A labor inspectorate funding decrease combined with a labor inspector hiring increase in 2022 resulted in fewer resources allocated for conducting labor inspections throughout the country. (3,48,49) While Colombia does not have labor inspectors trained or specialized in the identification of forced labor, the MOL created an "Elite Group for Inspections against Child Labor" on June 13, 2022, which comprises 50 inspectors who focus on the enforcement of child labor laws. (3,21,50,51) This group conducted child labor enforcement efforts leading to the rescue of 60 children, and signed pacts with local authorities in cities beyond Bogota, including Cali, Riohacha, and Itagui. The MOL also carried out 38 awareness-raising campaigns on child labor and safe adolescent work across 15 departments, reaching 1,561 participants. (3) Nevertheless, the number of children removed from child labor as a result of labor inspections is unknown. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Colombia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the lack of a case management system that tracks sentencing information.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	2,457 (5)	2,219 (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	316 (5)	585 (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (5)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (52-54)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (3)

In 2022, there were 2,079 children and adolescents registered as survivors of crimes related to the worst forms of child labor. Child pornography was linked to 65 percent of the violations and 23.6 percent involved commercial sexual exploitation and forced recruitment by non-state armed groups and criminal groups. (3) During the reporting period, 351 of the 585 suspects charged with crimes related to the worst forms of child labor were charged for using children to commit illicit activities. (3) The government did not report comprehensive annual statistics related to the number of convictions for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor. (21) In addition, as the AGO's case management system tracks criminal proceedings only through the stage of convictions, it does not include information on sentencing. As a result, the government did not report comprehensive information on sentencing. (3,21)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interagency Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Protection of the Adolescent Worker (CIETI)	Coordinates efforts to address the worst forms of child labor. (8) Chaired by MOL, includes 13 government agencies and representatives from trade unions, business associations, and civil society organizations. Oversees department-level CIETIs throughout the country, each comprising municipal-level committees. (3,55) During the reporting period, MOL and CIETIs reached 4,534 public officials in 898 municipalities through 161 technical assistance activities to address child labor. CIETIs in the Boyaca, Caldas, Cundinamarca, Tolima, and Valle del Cauca departments also conducted child labor research. (3) In addition, a MOL-led technical team trained both the departmental and municipal level CIETIs on the SIRITI. (3,21)

Colombia

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

The National Interagency Committee for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Commercial Sexual Exploitation convened in December in Cartagena to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children. (3) Throughout the reporting period, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) also made several efforts to build the capacity of the government to address child labor crimes. For instance, the ICBF and MOL established a protocol for labor inspectors to help with the identification of children in or at risk of child labor and ensure that these children are referred to appropriate social services. (3) The ICBF also provided capacity-building assistance on child labor prevention and elimination to National System for Family Welfare (SNBF) agencies at local levels, including by conducting 14 training workshops, reaching 1,654 officials and civil society stakeholders. (3) Finally, ICBF led the government efforts to establish a 2023 Action Plan with Ecuadorian authorities to address child labor in illegal mining operations. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy Guidelines to Prevent and Eradicate Child Labor and Protect the Adolescent Worker (2017–2027)	Aims to address child labor in the agriculture sector, develop child labor prevention strategies, improve the quality and coverage of child protection services, protect adolescent workers from hazardous work, create strategies to address child labor in domestic work, and establish evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to assess progress. (56) Contains a roadmap to prevent and eliminate child labor in mining and a cooperative agreement between the Ministry of Mining and Energy and the ICBF to prevent child labor in mining. (57) MOL also signed a pact to prevent and eliminate child labor in urban markets with the Bogota District Government's Institute for Social Economy (<i>Instituto para la Economía Social</i>), which include child labor awareness interventions conducted with employers and operators and ICBF's Mobile Teams for Comprehensive Protection (<i>Equipos Móviles de Protección Integral</i> or EMPIs). (3)
National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2018–2028)	Guides government actions at the national, departmental, and municipal levels for the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation, survivor assistance, and the strengthening of sentencing for perpetrators. (58) As part of this strategy, the Colombian government maintains an "Eyes in All Places" (<i>Ojos en Todas Partes</i>) public awareness campaign, which aims to prevent child sex tourism. Led by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism, and implemented in coordination with ICBF and the National Tourism Fund. (3) In 2022, MOL and other agencies conducted 86 campaigns to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation in 547 municipalities across 24 departments, reaching 3,308 participants. (3) Also in 2022, MOL and ICBF, along with the Organization of Ibero-American States, held a national competition for department-led efforts to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children, out of which five awardees traveled to Spain to conduct exchanges on efforts to prevent this crime. (3)
National Policy for the Prevention of Recruitment, Use, and Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents by Illegal Armed Groups or Organized Criminal Groups (2018–2028)	Directs government actions to prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, address violence against children, and improve interagency coordination. (3) The government also has a roadmap that establishes protocols to assist child survivors of armed conflict. (11) The Intersectoral Commission for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use and Sexual Violence Against Children by Illegal Armed Groups (CIPRUNNA) met twice in 2022. (3) Under this policy, CIPRUNNA also presented an assessment of its "Join for Me" (<i>Súmate por Mí</i>) strategy, conducted 263 technical assistance activities with local level authorities, and shared its findings on the probability of recruitment of children and adolescents by illegal armed groups in 2022. (3)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (3)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Campaigns Against Child Labor†	ICBF campaigns to increase coordination for the protection of children and adolescents with other government agencies at the national, departmental, and municipal levels, while leading the Family National Welfare System. (59) In 2022, ICBF continued to oversee 51 EMPLs with a total of 153 officers across 33 regional directorates. The EMPLs conducted numerous child labor prevention efforts, including carrying out "active searches" for children either engaged in child labor or at risk, which resulted in the identification of 2,042 children from January through November 2022. (3) Separately, EMPLs verified the school enrollment status for 9,152 children. (3)
Programs Addressing Trafficking in Persons‡	AGO continued to implement the "Don't be Fooled" (#EsoEsCuento) public awareness campaign to prevent human trafficking in 2022, targeting areas with high prevalence of this crime, such as the department of Bolivar, which includes Cartagena. (3) The National Police also continued implementing their "Open Your Eyes" (<i>Abre Tus Ojos</i>) public awareness and child protection program, which aims to protect children from exploitation in the worst forms of child labor, including the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking in persons, child pornography, and forced begging. The program reached 344,031 participants through 13,323 awareness and prevention activities. (3)
Development for Social Prosperity Programs‡	Families in Action (<i>Familias en Acción</i>) uses a conditional cash transfer program to address poverty and build human capital; United Network (<i>Red Unidos</i>) coordinates actions to reduce inequality and end extreme poverty; Healthy Generations (<i>Generaciones con Bienestar</i>) operates a children's rights program offering cultural and recreational activities for children ages 6 to 17 identified as vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor; and Youth in Action (<i>Jóvenes en Acción</i>) provides technical job training and conditional cash transfers to vulnerable urban youth ages 16 to 24. (60,61) As of October 2022, the Shake it Up Generation (<i>Generación Sacúdete</i>) program benefitted 81,569 children ages 14–18 across the country, helping them develop life goals and projects helping prevent the risks associated with the worst forms of child labor. Further, the Culture Fest (<i>Cultura Fest</i>) helped educate children and adolescents and their families on child labor and related crimes. (3) Other social protection programs like Katunaa Modality, Explorers' Generation, and Healthy Ethnic Generations collectively reached a total of 46,115 children across 141 municipalities in 2022, up from 42,378 across 132 municipalities in 2021. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Colombia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3,10,11)

Research indicates that existing social programs are insufficient to address the scope and magnitude of the worst forms of child labor problem in Colombia, particularly commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and recruitment for use in illicit activities. (3,5)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Colombia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 18 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 1,165 to 1,606 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 24.1 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Enhance the Attorney General's Office's case management system to track entire criminal proceedings beyond sentencing, to include information on the sentences and penalties handed down after conviction.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information on inspections conducted at worksites, child labor penalties imposed that were collected, convictions for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor, imposed penalties for violations of the worst forms of child labor, children removed from child labor due to inspections, and children referred to social services.	2009 – 2022
	Strengthen labor law enforcement by conducting unannounced inspections.	2022
	Increase funding for the Ministry of Labor to ensure that it has the capacity to conduct labor inspections throughout the country.	2022
	Ensure that all children rescued from child labor situations are referred to and provided social services.	2022
Social Programs	Expand efforts to improve education access for all children, especially those in rural and marginalized urban environments, including by ensuring adequate transportation to school, improving school infrastructure, and addressing violence affecting school attendance.	2013 – 2022
	Expand social programs to sufficiently address the scope of the worst forms of child labor, particularly commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and recruitment for use in illicit activities.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Comoros made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established a National Brigade for the Repression of Illegal Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons, and the National Committee on the Prevention of Illegal Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons to bolster its anti-trafficking efforts. In addition, it doubled the number of labor inspections carried out in 2022 compared to the previous year. However, children in Comoros are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in agriculture. Children also perform dangerous tasks in domestic work. Comoros' Labor Code applies only to workers with a formal work agreement, leaving child laborers, particularly those in the informal sector, vulnerable to exploitation. In addition, the legal framework defines child trafficking as requiring the use of force, fraud, or coercion, which does not conform with international standards. Finally, Comoros lacks a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Comoros.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	23.0 (42,145)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	81.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	20.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		76.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2012. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of manioc,† beans,† vanilla,† cloves,† and ylang-ylang† (3-5)
	Animal husbandry† (3,5)
	Fishing† (3,5)
Industry	Construction,† including in carpentry† (3,5)
	Extracting and selling marine sand (3-6)
Services	Domestic work† (3,5)
	Street vending (3,5,7)
	Repairing cars† and bicycles,† including tire vulcanization† and battery charging† (4,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, construction, street vending, baking, fishing, agriculture, and in illicit activities, such as drug trafficking (3-5,8-10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Data detailing the prevalence of children engaged in child labor in Comoros were not available for inclusion in this report. However, reports suggest that some children are subjected to domestic servitude and forced labor in the agricultural and fishing sectors. (5, 11) Children from poor or rural families are at higher risk of being

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placed into forced labor. (3,12) Some parents who are unable to care for their children send them to wealthier families, who are expected to provide food, shelter, and schooling for the children in exchange for housework. In practice, some may become domestic workers and victims of labor trafficking. (3,5,12) In addition, in Comoros, it is traditional practice to send children to Koranic teachers to receive an education. Some Koranic teachers, however, may force their students to perform domestic or agricultural work, and some children are sexually and physically abused. (5-7,12) In nearby Mayotte, which is administered by France, reports indicate that there are more than 3,000 unaccompanied children from Comoros, some of whom are exploited in child labor or may be vulnerable to human trafficking. (12,13) There are also reports that drug traffickers use Comoran teenagers to transport drugs on boats to Mayotte. (3,5,9)




Children in Comoros often work on family farms or family fishing boats, performing agricultural tasks with sharp tools, carrying heavy loads of products, and climbing tall heights to harvest fruit. In construction, children work without basic safety or protective equipment. (3,5,9)

Although boys and girls attend public primary schools in equal numbers, fewer girls complete primary education. Due to a lack of facilities to accommodate female menstrual cycles, girls often miss school or leave altogether. (3,5,14,15) Furthermore, poor school infrastructure, the limited availability of teachers, and physical and sexual violence in schools may impede access to education and increase the vulnerability of children to child labor. (5,6,9)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Comoros has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

In June 2021, Comoros ratified the Forced Labor Protocol, which commits the country to taking effective measures to prevent forced labor, protect survivors, and ensure survivors have access to judicial recourse. The Protocol entered into effect on July 15, 2022. (16)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Comoros' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of minimum age protections for all children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 129 of the Labor Code (17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 131(d) of the Labor Code; Article 7 of the Law to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking (17,18)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Dangerous Occupations; Article 131(d) of the Labor Code; Article 7 of the Law to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking (17-19)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2.1 and 131 of the Labor Code; Article 13 of the Law to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking (17,18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 131 of the Labor Code; Articles 13 and 14 of the Law to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking; Article 266-11 of the Penal Code (17,18)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 131 of the Labor Code; Articles 8–11 and 13 of the Law to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking; Articles 322 and 323 of the Penal Code (17,18,20)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 131(c) of the Labor Code; Article 6(c) of the Law to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking (17,18)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 41, 52, and 58 of Law No. 97-006/AF (21)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 6(a) of the Law to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking (18)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 2 of the Outline Act on the Education System; Article 4 on the Decree on Education Policy (22,23)
Free Public Education	No		Article 1 of the Outline Act on the Education System; Preamble of the Constitution (22,24)

* Country has no conscription (25)

Comoros' Law to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking defines child trafficking as requiring the use of force, fraud, or coercion, which does not conform with international standards. (18,26) While the Labor Code does not stipulate this requirement, it also does not exclude the means of force, fraud, or coercion for child trafficking victims. (17,18,27) The 2020 Penal Code also does not exclude the means of force, fraud, or coercion for child trafficking victims. (28) Thus, relevant Comoran laws do not meet international standards.

The Labor Code allows children under age 15 to perform light work in domestic work or agriculture if it does not interfere with their education or physical or moral development. The Labor Code, however, does not set age 13 as the minimum age for light work, specify the conditions under which light work may be conducted, or limit the number of hours for light work, as defined by international standards on child labor. (17,22,27) In addition, the Labor Code applies only to workers who perform work under a formal employment agreement, which does not conform to international standards requiring that all children be protected under the law establishing a minimum age for work. (17,27)

Although education is compulsory from ages 3 to 16 in Comoros, there is no free basic education for children in Comoros as established by law. This, in addition to a lack of infrastructure, teachers, and transportation hamper schooling and retention of children, increases the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (5,6,22,29) Furthermore, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws, investigates allegations of child labor, and refers cases of the worst forms of child labor for criminal investigation. (5,6,27)
Ministry of the Interior	Oversees the National Brigade for the Repression of Illegal Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons*. Established in March of 2022, and is composed of 16 officers from the police, gendarmerie, and civil security. (13,30) Responsible for investigating human trafficking cases and coordinating with IOM, <i>Service d'Ecoute</i> , and civil protection to provide trafficking survivors with social services. (13,31) The Police Morals and Minors Brigade, also operating under the Ministry, investigates allegations of child abuse, including child trafficking, and refers cases for prosecution. (5,32)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes criminal cases, including those related to child trafficking. Has specialized courts for minors, with judges responsible for the prosecution of cases involving forced labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. (5-7)

*Agency responsible for child labor enforcement was created during the reporting period.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Comoros took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	0 (3)	0 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	4 (3)	3 (5,32)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (17)	Yes (17)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	25 (3)	50 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (3)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (17)	Yes (5,17)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (3)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (5)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Comoros' workforce, which includes approximately 229,000 workers. Research indicates that Comoros does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (5,33) Reports indicate that there is a lack of training, equipment, transportation, and funding available to conduct child labor inspections. (5,6,8) Inspectors have indicated that although there is a budget for fixed costs such as salaries, there is no operating budget for the labor inspectorate, and labor inspectors have to rely on their own funds for costs such as transportation. (3,5,6,9)

The labor inspectorate conducted 50 inspections during the reporting period, a 100 percent increase compared to the number of inspections carried out in 2021. (5) Although the labor inspectorate is permitted to conduct unannounced inspections, in practice, inspectors usually respond only when the MOL receives complaints. Furthermore, inspections are primarily conducted in the formal sector, even though most child labor is concentrated in the informal sector. (5) The labor inspectorate is required to submit a yearly report detailing its work, including statistics on inspections, offenses identified, and penalties imposed; however, no report of this type was identified during the reporting period. (3,5) Finally, although a reciprocal referral mechanism was established under the National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Comoros 2010–2015, it does not appear that this mechanism is currently active. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Comoros took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Police Morals and Minors Brigade that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (3)	No (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (5)

In 2022, Comoros made progress in identifying trafficking victims, investigating trafficking cases, and working with international organizations to conduct anti-trafficking trainings. (13,34) In particular, the government identified trafficking victims and screened for trafficking indicators, with support from IOM, which partnered with the government to develop a manual for identifying trafficking victims. In November 2022, IOM also held a training related to trafficking victim identification, screening, and using the manual. (13,34) In addition, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with IOM, held anti-trafficking trainings for law enforcement and civil society organizations. However, reports indicate that prosecutors and judges have received insufficient training related to trafficking prosecutions. (34)

Since the government established the National Brigade, four potential trafficking cases have been referred to it for further investigation; with at least one case involved child trafficking. (30,31) Officers in the National Brigade noted the need for additional training related to child-friendly interviewing techniques, survivor-centered and trauma-informed approaches, and general human trafficking concepts. (31)

Reports indicate that a lack of trained staff, equipment, transportation, and funding inhibit criminal law enforcement efforts against the worst forms of child labor. (5,11,12) The government also did not provide comprehensive information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a failure of coordinating bodies to convene.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee Against Child Labor	Coordinates government efforts on child labor. Chaired by MOL. (7,35) Research was unable to determine whether the committee was active during the reporting period.

The National Committee on the Prevention of Illegal Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons was established in March 2022 to lead government efforts to apply anti-trafficking policies, replacing the Anti-Trafficking Task Force. The National Committee operates under the direction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and comprises multiple government agencies, the *Services d'Ecoute*, NGOs, and international organizations. (13,31)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a policy specifically dedicated to addressing child labor.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy for the Protection of Children (2016–2021)	Aimed to improve child protection in Comoros; included components to address the worst forms of child labor, with a focus on child trafficking. Implemented by the Ministry of Health, Solidarity, Social Protection, and Gender Promotion. (7,35,37) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues. (38)

Although child labor is integrated into some government policies, Comoros has not adopted a new national action plan to address child labor since the previous plan expired in 2021. (5,11)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
<i>Services d'Ecoute</i> (Listening Services)†	UNICEF-funded, government-backed centers that provide protective services and offer immediate assistance to vulnerable and abused children. (5,11,39) Investigates allegations of violence against children, including the worst forms of child labor, and refers perpetrators to criminal authorities for prosecution. (9,40) An independent evaluation of <i>Services d'Ecoute</i> found that it responded to the needs of child survivors of violence and improved the professionalism of those responding to child survivors. However, program personnel lack relevant training in social services provision and in international standards on child protection, which has resulted in incomplete casework, and a lack of evaluation and follow-up with child survivors. (39,41)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Comoros.

Although the government has programs that target child labor, their scope is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in agriculture, fishing, domestic, and informal work.

While the *Services d'Ecoute* may provide assistance services to children, these services are designed to address cases involving violence against children rather than child labor issues. (3,5)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Comoros (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's light work provisions set age 13 as the minimum age, prescribe the number of hours per week that light work may be undertaken, and specify the conditions under which light work may be conducted, as defined by international standards on child labor.	2012 – 2022
	Establish by law the right to free basic education.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's minimum age for work provisions and protections apply to children in unpaid or non-contractual work.	2015 – 2022
	Align child trafficking laws with international standards by ensuring that force, fraud, or coercion are not required elements in child trafficking cases.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Raise the minimum age for work from age 15 to age 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2021 – 2022
	Provide the labor inspectorate with an operating budget for resources, training, transportation, and equipment to ensure adequate coverage of the workforce.	2009 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 3 to 6 to ensure adequate coverage of a labor force of approximately 229,000 people.	2018 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors expand their coverage of the informal sector.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate uses its authority to conduct unannounced inspections rather than relying solely on incoming complaints to initiate inspections.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate fulfills its mandate to collect and publish data and statistics related to inspection efforts on an annual basis.	2019 – 2022
	Establish and use a reciprocal survivor referral mechanism between labor enforcement authorities and social services.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information on the number of criminal law investigations, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and penalties assessed related to cases of the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
	Provide additional trainings to criminal law enforcement personnel and judges, as well as expand the allocation of resources, transportation, and equipment, to enhance criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Committee Against Child Labor carries out its intended mandate.	2014 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as a new national action plan to combat child labor.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education, by offering appropriate facilities to meet the needs of girls, improving infrastructure and teacher availability, and addressing school violence.	2014 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the prevalence of child labor and the types of work children perform in Comoros.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that social program personnel, such as those in the <i>Services d'Ecoute</i> , have adequate and relevant training to be able to appropriately respond to the needs of child survivors, including those abused by religious instructors.	2019 – 2022
	Implement and expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, particularly in agriculture, fishing, domestic work, and informal work.	2009 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT REGRESSION IN PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, the Democratic Republic of the Congo made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In October, the Inter-ministerial Commission to Combat Child Labor in Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites launched the Child Labor Monitoring System. Moreover, the Ministry of Labor began recruiting 2,000 labor inspectors and controllers, some of whom will be trained to conduct inspections in mine sites. President Felix Tshisekedi also promulgated Law No° 22/067 for the Prevention and Fight Against Trafficking in Persons, which strengthened penalties for trafficking in persons. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because of the national army's complicity in the worst forms of child labor. During the year, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo supplied weapons and munitions to non-state armed groups known for recruiting children. Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are also subjected to other forms of the worst forms of child labor, including in the forced mining of gold, tin ore (cassiterite), tantalum ore (coltan), and tungsten ore (wolframite), and are used in armed conflict, sometimes as a result of forcible recruitment or abduction by non-state armed groups. Children also mine cobalt ore (heterogenite) in the Copperbelt region. The government did not publish labor or criminal law enforcement data. It also failed to take active measures to ensure that children are not inappropriately incarcerated, penalized, or physically harmed solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of their exploitation in the worst forms of child labor. Other gaps remain, including a lack of sufficient numbers of enforcement personnel, insufficient training for enforcement personnel, limited financial resources, and poor coordination of government efforts to address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	17.4 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	16.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		69.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2017–2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including tilling fields, planting seeds, weeding, watering and harvesting crops, carrying heavy loads,† and use of chemical products and machetes in the production of beans, corn, manioc, rice, and sweet potatoes (3-6)
	Fishing, including maintaining fishing tools, baiting hooks, transporting heavy loads, using explosives, and salting, smoking, and packaging fish (3-7)
	Herding and raising livestock such as chickens, goats, and pigs, including feeding, cleaning cages or stalls, and disposing of waste (4,8)
Industry	Mining, including carrying heavy loads,† digging, sifting, sorting, transporting, using explosives, washing, and working underground‡ in the production of diamonds, copper, cobalt ore (heterogenite), gold, tin ore (cassiterite), tantalum ore (coltan), and tungsten ore (wolframite) (3-6,9-12)
Services	Domestic work (3-6)
	Driving motorcycle taxis (3)
	Street work, including vending, garbage scavenging, and carrying heavy loads (3,6,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced mining of gold, tantalum (coltan), tin (cassiterite), and tungsten (wolframite), each sometimes as a result of debt bondage (4-6,10,11,13-15)
	Forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation (6,13,16,17)
	Use in illicit activities for non-state armed groups, including carrying stolen goods, and smuggling minerals (15,18)
	Recruitment or abduction of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including as checkpoint monitors, combatants, concubines, domestic workers, field hands, human shields, looters, porters, spies, and tax collectors at mining sites (5,6,13)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Escalating conflict in the east rendered children increasingly vulnerable to recruitment by non-state armed groups, forced labor in artisanal mining, and prostitution. (6,13,19-25) Non-state armed groups in Ituri reportedly seized young children from their homes, forcing them to transport heavy loads or perform domestic work. (4,23,24) UNICEF and other international organizations estimate that between 40 and 70 percent of non-state armed groups in central DRC include children, some as young as age 5. (6,13,26) Non-state armed groups, criminal gangs, and illicit smuggling networks operating in the DRC continued to abduct, recruit, or use children in armed conflict during the reporting period. (6,13,27) There were also reports of non-state armed groups connected to ISIS-DRC, also known as the Allied Democratic Forces, recruiting children in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces in eastern DRC. (6,23,24,27) The UN verified that a total of 1,545 children, as young as 5, were recruited and used in armed conflict, including in support roles (643), in combat (585), as guards (206), as spies (54) and as fetish keepers (26), and in unspecified roles (31). In October 2022, Human Rights Watch documented claims that the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) had provided ammunition to the armed group Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and collaborated with the armed groups Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo, Coalition of Movements for Change, Nyatura, and Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated. (23,28) The UN verified that these armed groups recruited and used children in 2022. (23,24,29,30)

In eastern Congo's conflict-affected regions, children extract and transport tin (cassiterite), tantalum (coltan), tungsten (wolframite), diamonds, and gold. Thousands of children also work in cobalt and copper mines in the southern Copperbelt region. (31,32) Non-state armed groups and their Congolese political and military backers control mineral resources in this region. (21) Prevalence of child labor is highest in the country's artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector, which operates with minimal oversight. (33) One study detected child labor at 17 of 58 ASM sites surveyed. At informal or illegal ASM operations, children are uniquely exposed to hazardous working conditions and, in some instances, to forced labor. (19,34-36) While the exact number of children working in cobalt is unknown, estimates indicate between 5,000 and 35,000 children work as artisanal cobalt miners. (37-39) In addition, non-state armed groups subjected children to forced labor in artisanal mines in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Maniema, where forced labor, armed conflict, and mining are often intertwined. (5,40)

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Children from the Kasai region were taken to Kinshasa and used in forced begging schemes. (5,17,40,41) Tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced in eastern DRC's Ituri Province because of the conflict, making thousands of children vulnerable to sex trafficking, forced labor, or commercial sexual exploitation. (40,42,43) Despite evidence that children are subjected to participation in armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced labor in mining, the prevalence and nature of child labor in other sectors remains unclear because a comprehensive, stand-alone child labor survey has never been conducted in the DRC. (5,23,24)

UNICEF estimates that only 25 percent of children under age 5 have birth certificates. (44) Low rates of birth registration leave many children vulnerable to child labor because it makes age verification difficult during armed forces (FARDC) recruitment campaigns and hinders efforts to identify and separate children associated with armed groups. (10,45) While Congolese law provides for free, compulsory education, only slightly more than half of the DRC's 51,574 public schools were financed by the state. At public schools that did not receive government funding, parents were asked to pay school fees, which were often prohibitively high, to support teacher salaries. (46,47) During the reporting period, at least 750,000 children in eastern DRC's conflict-affected provinces were unable to attend school. (25)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The DRC has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the DRC's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a compulsory education age of 12 years that is lower than the minimum age of work, which is 18 years.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Prelude and Articles 6 and 7 of the Labor Code; Articles 2, 50, and 55 of the Child Protection Code (48,49)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 10 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work (50)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 8–15 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work; Articles 26 and 299 of the Mining Code; Article 8b of the Decree on Validation Procedures for Artisanal Mines; Article 125 of the Labor Code (49-53)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 3 of the Labor Code; Articles 53 and 187 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 16 and 61 of the Constitution; Article 8 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work; Article 68 of the Law on the Prevention and Repression of Trafficking in Persons (48-50,54,55)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 3, 321, 326, and 328 of the Labor Code; Articles 53, 162, and 187 of the Child Protection Code; Article 174j of the Penal Code; Articles 8 and 20 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work (48-50,52,55,56)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 3 of the Labor Code; Articles 53, 61, 169, 173, 179–180, 182–183, and 187 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 174b, 174j, 174m, and 174n of the Penal Code; Article 8 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work (48-50,56)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 3 of the Labor Code; Article 8 of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Children's Work; Articles 53, 187–188, and 194 of the Child Protection Code (48-50)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 27 of the Law on the Military Status of the Congolese Armed Forces; Articles 2, 53, 71, and 187 of the Child Protection Code (48,57)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Articles 2 and 7 of the Law on Armed Forces; Article 27 of the Law on the Military Status of the Congolese Armed Forces; Articles 53, 71, and 187 of the Child Protection Code (48,57,58)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 53, 71, and 187 of the Child Protection Code; Article 190 of the Constitution (48,54)
Compulsory Education Age	No	12‡	Article 38 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 7.21, 12, and 72 of the Law on National Education; Article 43 of the Constitution (48,54,59)
Free Public Education	No		Article 38 of the Child Protection Code; Article 43 of the Constitution; Articles 12 and 72 of the Law on National Education (48,54,59)

* Country has no conscription (61)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (48,59)

During the reporting period, President Tshisekedi promulgated Law No° 22/067 for the Prevention and Fight Against Trafficking in Persons, which criminalizes all forms of trafficking and prescribes stringent penalties. However, the law continues to require a threat, use of force, coercion, fraud, deception, or abuse of power for a child to have been considered trafficked. (29,55) Children are required to attend school only up to age 12, based on available information. This standard makes children ages 12 to 18 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. In addition, the law provides for free schooling for 6 years, although basic education is a total of 9 years. The failure to provide for complete free basic education may increase the risk of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor. (48,54,59)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment, Labor, and Social Welfare (MELSS)	Investigates cases related to child labor, including its worst forms. (62,63) Refers cases of child labor to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) for prosecution. Currently lacks the capacity to conduct inspections in the mining sector. (3)
Ministry of Mines	Includes the Service for Assistance and Supervision of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining, the government agency responsible for artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) regulation and training, and the Division of Mines, which oversees mining-related departments and public services, including large-scale mining, at the provincial level, and enforcement of the 2018 Mining Code. (36,64)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Criminal Enforcement Agencies	The Ministry of Justice enforces criminal laws related to child labor. (3,4) Oversees 5 juvenile courts in Kinshasa and 19 UNICEF-funded child protection courts throughout the country. (4) Assists the International Criminal Court in conducting investigations and prosecuting individuals charged with using children in armed conflict. (3,4,66) The Ministry of Interior investigates allegations of human trafficking rings, refers child labor cases to the MOJ for prosecution, and coordinates support and reintegration services with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity, and Humanitarian Action. (3,66) Includes the Special Police Unit for Women and Children, which addresses conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence against women and children, protects women and children who are survivors of physical abuse, and ensures the demobilization of children. (3,4) The Congolese National Police Child Protection and Sexual Violence Directorate has a formal mechanism in place with local NGOs to screen for possible human trafficking survivors among vulnerable groups. (41) In addition, the Mining and Hydrocarbon Police are charged with enforcing the mining code, including prohibitions against child labor, at artisanal and large-scale mining sites. (36) The Ministry of Defense investigates and prosecutes military officials in military courts suspected of recruiting and using child soldiers, and leads the implementation of the Action Plan to End the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. Through its Department of Child Protection, coordinates actions with UNICEF. (3) Moreover, through its Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups Unit, coordinates demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration activities. (66,67)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in the DRC took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Employment, Labor, and Social Welfare (MELSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (6)	Unknown (23)
Number of Labor Inspectors	212 (6)	217 (23,29)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (49)	Yes (49,50)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (6)	No (23)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (6)	Unknown (23)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	565 (6,27)	Unknown (23)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (6)	Unknown (23)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (6)	Unknown (23)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Unknown (23)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Unknown (23)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (49)	Yes (49)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Unknown (23)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (23)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (23)

Research indicates that the DRC currently does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (23,29) The government is hiring an additional 2,000 labor inspectors and controllers (serving as inspection assistants) in 2023, for a total of 2,172 inspectors across 23 of the DRC's 26 provinces. (23,29) Once this cohort is trained and deployed, the DRC will have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (68) The Ministry of Labor also increased its budget in 2022 to \$19.6 million, up from \$13 million in 2021. However, there is no reported budget for the Labor Inspectorate, and reports suggests that it suffers from poorly equipped offices, irregular electrical power, and lack government-issued computers and mobile phones. (23) Many inspectors also do not have access to vehicles for inspections and regional labor inspectorates rely on fees collected from violators to sustain their operations. (5,6) In addition, labor inspectors did not receive training on enforcing child labor laws in 2022. (23)

Despite these challenges, provincial authorities conducted inspections in the formal mining sector in Haut Katanga, Tanganyika, and Lualaba, where child labor is known to occur. (5,24) The United States Department of

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State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement also continued to provide trafficking in persons training as part of its training for mining police. During the reporting period, they trained 245 specialized mining police officers to address human trafficking in this sector. (23)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in the DRC took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inadequate human resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (6)	No (23)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (6)	Unknown (23)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (6)	Unknown (23)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	Unknown (23)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (6)	Unknown (23)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (23)

While the Ministry of Interior is responsible for investigating allegations of human trafficking and referring child labor cases to the Ministry of Justice for prosecution, it lacks the necessary financial and human resources to carry out its mandate. In addition, the Special Police Unit for the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Violence (PEPVS) lacks adequate resources to address child trafficking and child labor, especially outside of major cities. (69) Finally, the Ministry of Justice lacks the resources to rapidly, fully, and consistently carry out investigations and prosecutions. (69)

The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (UEPN-DDR) coordinates verification and release of children associated with armed groups. Working with the Ministry of Gender and Family, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), UNICEF, and NGOs, it refers demobilized child soldiers to social service providers for family reunification and reinsertion. (3,66,67) The commission is led by the Ministry of Defense's Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups Unit. (66,67) In addition, the Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting, which is co-chaired by the UN, documents all grave violations committed against children. With UN support, the Centers for Transit and Orientation in North Kivu Province provided psychological counseling, basic education, and job skills training to ex-child soldiers during the reporting period. (6)

The FARDC, mining police, and private security forces, including those guarding large-scale mining concessions, reportedly subject child laborers on ASM sites to extortion and physical abuse. (21,22,70) There is no evidence that the government took action to address these abuses in 2022. (71) In addition, while the FARDC removed children from armed groups, these children were occasionally detained for 2 to 14 days. (5,41) When children are detained, official procedure requires that the government alert MONUSCO, which then assumes responsibility for demobilizing children and referring them to social service providers. Prior to that handover, children may be held in local detention cells, which suffer from overcrowding, lack of food and health services, and poor sanitation. (5,41) Furthermore, penalties for criminal violations related to the worst forms of child labor—including the use of children in armed conflict—are 1 to 3 years' imprisonment with fines of up to \$784 (1,576,624 Congolese Francs); the penalties are insufficient to serve as deterrents. (4,15,48,50,56,72,73)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of clarity of institutional mandates.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (CN-PFTE)	Oversees the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor and monitors its implementation. (74,75) Led by the Ministry of Employment, Labor, and Social Welfare and includes representatives from 12 other ministries, local NGOs, and civil society. (3,74,75) During the reporting period, the committee appointed a new President, the incoming Secretary General of the Ministry of Mines, Jacques Ramazani, who coordinated with the ILO to host a relaunch of the Inter-ministerial Commission to Combat Child Labor in Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites (CISTEMA) on October 26, 2022. CISTEMA, which is chaired by the Ministry of Mines, coordinates efforts to eradicate child labor in the DRC's mining sector and serves as an adviser to other ministries addressing child labor in mining. CISTEMA committed to following national goals to eliminate child labor in artisanal mining by 2025. (23) The CN-PFTE and CISTEMA also validated the Child Labor Monitoring System (CLMS) during the reporting period. (23) The CLMS platform includes a database for tracking cases of child labor in artisanal mines, which can be accessed using cellphones to enable wide-reaching reporting. (23) However, research continued to indicate that coordination among government ministries remained weak, and funding and communication between government entities remains a challenge. (23)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of regional scope.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Child Soldiers Action Plans	The DRC has several key policies to address children in armed conflict. The UEPN-DDR's National Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement (DDR III) plan aims to provide rehabilitation and reintegration services to demobilized combatants, including children. (13,14,74,75) DDR III is implemented with UN and international support and within the 2013 Framework Agreement for Peace, Security, and Cooperation for the DRC and the Great Lakes Region. (74,76,77) Requires children separated from armed groups to be immediately transferred to UNICEF. (66) The Action Plan to End the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers is a UN-backed plan that aims to prevent and end the use of children in armed forces, provide support and reintegration services, pursue accountability for perpetrators, and create a partnership framework for the UN and the government. (78,79) Includes standard operating procedures for age verification to help the FARDC avoid underage recruitment. (13,14) In 2022, the MOD worked with the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNICEF to identify and remove child recruits from FARDC and non-state armed groups. (6,80)
Action Plans to Address Child Labor in Mining	Includes the National Sectoral Strategy to Combat Child Labor in Artisanal Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites (2017–2025), which was developed by the Ministry of Mines and seeks to eradicate child labor in artisanal mining by 2025. The strategy aims to strengthen relevant laws, improve data collection on the prevalence of child labor in the mining sector, promote responsible sourcing regulations, improve child protection measures, and build stakeholder capacity to address these issues. (81) During the reporting period, CISTEMA officially launched the Child Labor Monitoring System to identify and remove children from mines. (23,24) The government is also cooperating with the Public-Private Alliance for Responsible Minerals Trade to end child labor in the cobalt sector. (82) Finally, the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2012–2025) promotes the enforcement of laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor, universal primary education, monitoring and evaluation efforts, and improved coordination of stakeholders. (6) Also seeks to raise awareness of the worst forms of child labor, empower communities to stop child labor practices, and provide prevention and reintegration services. (23) However, the government does not currently have policies to address child labor in the mining sector at the regional level. (23,24)
Agency for Prevention and the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons' (APLTP) National Action Plan (2020–2024); and new Agency for Youth and the Fight Against Sexual Violence and Trafficking in Persons	Addresses all forms of trafficking in persons, including foreign national and Congolese citizen survivors, as well as child soldiers. (82) Aims to prevent human trafficking through national awareness-raising and government training programs, survivor identification and care, and law enforcement cooperation and coordination. (82) During the reporting period, APLTP worked with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Labor to provide care to child trafficking survivors. In January 2022, APLTP also finalized its plan to distribute and train relevant actors on the newly adopted national standard operating procedures for victim identification. (23,24) During the reporting period, the APLTP was disbanded and in its place, the government created a new agency responsible for coordinating the government's antitrafficking response, the Agency for Youth and the Fight Against Sexual Violence and Trafficking in Persons. (69)

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In 2022, President Tshisekedi announced a 4-year Partnership Compact at the Transforming Education Summit in New York. The Compact requires major reforms to teachers' workforce development, including payroll and training, that currently prevent many children in the DRC from attending school. (83) Although the DRC has developed a number of action plans to address child labor, only some received dedicated funding. (12,34,66)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem in all relevant sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Programs under the Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Mines	Includes Combating Child Labor in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Cobalt Industry (2018–2022) (COTECCO), a \$3.5 million project implemented by the ILO in Kolwezi, Lualaba Province, aimed at reducing child labor and improving working conditions in the mining sector; Supporting Progress on Labor Standards in the DRC, a \$3 million project implemented by the ILO to enhance the capacity of the labor inspectorate and improve working conditions; and the Global Trace Protocol Project, a global project that seeks to increase downstream tracing of goods made by child labor and forced labor. (38) Under COTECCO, CISTEMA had appointed a supervisor for the new CLMS and trained 10 CISTEMA personnel on database procedures as of November 2022. CISTEMA was also working to create provincial commissions in 11 provinces to track child labor in mines by the end of the reporting period. (23,24)
UNICEF-Funded Education Programs	Under the auspices of the government's Free Primary Education Program, and with support from UNICEF and Global Partnership for Education, the Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education continued to provide free primary education for children up to the age of 12. (5,6,84,85) In 2022, UNICEF reached 56,000 out-of-school children through its alternative learning pathways. These children, who were unable to attend school due to conflict or natural disaster, were able to continue learning through educational programs on the radio, workbooks, and other learning tools. (83)
USAID-Funded Projects	The USAID-PACT Sustainable Mine Site Validation (SMSV, 2018-2022) is a 4-year cooperative agreement that aims to implement a technically and financially sustainable Mine Site Qualification and Validation model in North and South Kivu that adheres to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals; the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; Regional Certification Mechanism; and DRC law. (86) SMSV also aims to develop strategies to fight child labor, including by raising awareness of child labor issues among local stakeholders, and by building the capacity of mining inspectors and local stakeholder committees to qualify and validate mine sites. (86) In addition, the Conflict-Free Gold Project seeks to create a transparent supply chain model for clean artisanal gold; Understanding Artisanal Mining Supply Chains and Conflict Financing in DRC is gathering reliable data to address 'conflict minerals' trade in eastern DRC; and the Program for the Development of Eastern Congo (P-DEC) aims to adopt bottom-up peacebuilding approaches to reduce conflict and bridge social divisions. (87-89)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (90,91)

The scope of child disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs remains insufficient, the reintegration process is slow, funding is inadequate, and collaboration between partners is weak. (13,14,45) Furthermore, children separated from armed groups remain vulnerable to stigmatization and re-recruitment. In particular, girls, who make up an estimated 30 to 40 percent of children associated with armed groups, often survive prolonged sexual and physical abuse in captivity and face social exclusion upon their return. (11,45,92,93) There is also a lack of efforts to assist street children and programs to provide support to children engaged in forced labor in agriculture, domestic work, mining, and commercial sexual exploitation. (6,10,11,45,92,93)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the DRC (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the compulsory education age from 12 years to 18 years to be consistent with the minimum age for employment.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that laws sufficiently criminally prohibit the various acts involved in the trafficking process and trafficking for the purposes of forced labor..	2021 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education, including lower secondary education.	2022
	Increase penalties for child labor crimes so that they are sufficiently stringent to serve as a deterrent.	2013 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is fully funded, including providing vehicles for labor inspectors and government-issued computers to allow inspectors to carry out their mandated duties.	2015 – 2022
	Collect and publish complete data on labor enforcement efforts, including labor inspectorate funding, the number of worksite inspections conducted, and the number of violations found, penalties imposed, and fines collected.	2020 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 217 to 789 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that inspectors and criminal law enforcement agencies receive adequate training to carry out their duties.	2011 – 2022
	Collect and publish complete data related to criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and penalties imposed related to child labor crimes.	2009 – 2022
	End FARDC support for non-state armed groups that recruit children, ensure children are not detained in dangerous conditions, and hold perpetrators of child labor crimes, including child soldiering, accountable.	2017 – 2022
	Issue appropriate decrees to ensure that enacted laws are implemented, including those related to light work provisions.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure the criminal justice system has the resources to investigate and prosecute child labor violations.	2011 – 2022
	Improve coordination among relevant criminal enforcement agencies in conducting investigations, collecting data, and providing services to survivors.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that security forces do not subject children to human rights violations, including extortion and physical abuse, in artisanal small-scale mining operations.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Improve coordination among relevant ministries and agencies to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that they receive adequate resources and trained personnel to address the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.	2015 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure all relevant policies, national action plans, and sectoral strategies to address the worst forms of child labor are adopted, funded, and implemented as intended, including at the regional level.	2011 – 2022
Social Programs	Conduct a stand-alone child labor survey to better inform child labor policies and practices along with a prevalence survey focused on mining.	2013 – 2022
	Improve access to education by ensuring that all children are registered at birth or are issued identification documents.	2012 – 2022
	Improve access to education for all children by regulating classroom size, training additional teachers, subsidizing fees, and making additional efforts to prevent schools from being attacked and occupied by armed groups.	2012 – 2022
	Expand efforts to address the needs of demobilized children and incorporate stigmatization, gender, and re-recruitment concerns into programs to reintegrate such children.	2009 – 2022
	Establish or expand social programs designed to assist children engaged in forced labor in agriculture, mining, street work, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation, and implement existing programs as intended.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, the Republic of the Congo made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established a Child Protection Action Plan, which includes measures for assisting child trafficking survivors. In addition, child labor data were published in June 2022, resulting from a nationwide study carried out by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and Solidarity in coordination with the United Nations Children's Fund. However, children in the Republic of the Congo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks such as working in mines and stone quarries. The government has yet to accede to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, and existing social programs are not sufficient to address the scope of child labor in all relevant sectors. In addition, the country lacks a national policy to address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Republic of the Congo (ROC). Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	25.4 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	27.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		67.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS5), 2014–2015. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including in the production of manioc, peanuts, corn, plantains, sweet potatoes, and sugarcane (3-8)
Services	Directing road traffic (7)
	Fishing (4,6,9)
	Domestic work (3,4,6,9-11)
	Market vending and carrying heavy loads (4,5,11,12)
Industry	Working in mines and stone quarries, including extracting gold and breaking stones (7,11-13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as the result of human trafficking (4,7,11,12,14-17)
	Forced labor in agriculture, including in the production of sugarcane and manioc, and fishing (3,5-8,11,16,18)
	Forced labor in market vending, working in bakeries, and working in stone quarries (3,5,11,16,18)
	Forced domestic work (7)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In some rural areas, the majority ethnic Bantu population forces non-majority, indigenous children—such as from the Baka, Aka, and Kola groups—to perform agricultural work, including forced work, for low wages and under the threat of physical abuse. Within the ROC, internal child trafficking networks relocate children from rural

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areas to urban centers for forced labor in domestic work and market vending. (3,4,9,16) In urban environments, including the major cities of Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville, children from West Africa perform forced domestic work for West African families. (3,10,11) Additionally, many foreign children subjected to forced domestic work or commercial sexual exploitation in the ROC originate from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and other West African nations, including Benin. (3,11,13,14)

The Constitution stipulates that education is free until age 16; in practice, however, some parents are required to pay for books, uniforms, and school fees, which may limit access to education for some children, especially indigenous children, who may also experience cultural and ethnic discrimination. (11,19-23) The government offers an expenses subsidy—"tuition waiver"—for indigenous children, but research indicated that the waiver program was not clearly communicated to families in remote areas, resulting in limited use during the reporting period. (4,8,11) The absence of sanitation facilities, a lack of teachers, and sexual violence in schools also pose barriers to education for some children, particularly in non-urban areas and among refugee populations. (11,20,24,25)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The ROC has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the ROC's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the absence of a list of hazardous work activities prohibited for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 116 of the Labor Code; Article 68 of the Child Protection Code (26,27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 68 of the Child Protection Code (27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 4 of the Labor Code; Articles 68 and 122 of the Child Protection Code; Article 33 of the Constitution; Articles 4–6 and 14 of Law No. 22-2019 on Combating Trafficking in Persons (26-28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 4, and 6 of Law No. 22-2019 on Combating Trafficking in Persons (28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 60, 65–68, and 122 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 334 and 335 of the Penal Code (27,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 68–70 and 122 of the Child Protection Code (27)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 30 of the Military and Gendarmerie Code (30)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 49 of the Child Protection Code (27)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 49 and 111 of the Child Protection Code (27)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 29 of the Constitution; Articles 1 and 3 of the Education Law (23,31)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 29 of the Constitution; Article 1 of the Education Law (23,31)

* Country has no conscription (32)

Order No. 2224, which established a list of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children, is no longer in force. (11,33) The government has yet to develop a replacement hazardous work list, and therefore has no current national law or regulation regarding the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (8)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws. (34) Conducts initial inspections before referring cases to the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and the Promotion of Indigenous People (MOJ) for prosecution, and offers support to victims afterwards. (4)
Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and the Promotion of Indigenous People (MOJ)	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor. Dedicates two judges to child protection cases. (4,6)
Ministry of the Interior's National Police	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor and conducts initial investigations into cases of forced labor, human trafficking, and the use of children in illicit activities. Conducts operations to rescue trafficked children used for labor exploitation. (3,4,6,9)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in the ROC took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of sufficient resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	248 (4)	248 (11)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (4)	No (11)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (4)	No (35)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (4)	No (35)

During the reporting period, some government employees attended training with the ILO and the French Labor Inspectorate on workplace safety practices, workplace discrimination, and workers' rights. (8) However, inspectors did not receive any country-specific training on the enforcement of the ROC's child labor laws. (11) Further, training opportunities for labor inspectors, particularly for lower-level staff, are very limited due to a lack of resources, including budget shortfalls and a lack of internet access. (36,37) Research indicates that labor inspections are focused on large businesses and urban areas, while child labor occurs predominantly in rural areas, family enterprises, and the informal economy, including children working on their own account. (20) In addition, inspectors do not have access to government vehicles and rely on the employers whose businesses are being inspected to provide transportation. (8,38) Although the government lacks a formal process for referring children found in situations of child labor to appropriate social services providers, individual labor inspectors may leverage personal connections with their counterparts in other ministries to refer children found during inspections to social services. (3,4,9-11)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in the ROC took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (4)	No (11)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (4)	No (11,35)

The government provides funding for investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of suspected traffickers in the context of broader judicial and law enforcement programs. (10) In general, the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and the Promotion of Indigenous People (MOJ) and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and Solidarity (MSA) experienced difficulties in prosecuting offenders due to a weak judicial system, poor record-keeping, a large backlog of cases in the high court, courts that convene infrequently and irregularly, and criminal law enforcement officials' and judges' uneven knowledge of anti-trafficking legislation and the Child Protection Code. (14,36)

The MSA, MOL, MOJ, and the National Police work together to enforce criminal laws against child trafficking; however, their efforts are limited to Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. The National Police lack funds for fuel, new equipment, and training on new laws, and sometimes demand payments from NGOs and other stakeholders to assist in or execute operations to rescue victims of child trafficking. (4,6,8,11,36) Research found that many police officers did not understand what constituted criminal child labor violations, and that court and MOJ personnel did not fully understand or know how to handle such cases. (3)

The government has an anti-child trafficking agreement with the Government of Benin that enables criminal authorities and social services agencies to repatriate children found in the worst forms of child labor. (11,39)

However, during the reporting period, no new repatriations or prosecutions took place. (11) The National Commission to Fight Against Trafficking in Persons has the aim of coordinating efforts on trafficking in persons and forced labor at the federal level. Although Article 34 of the 2019 Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons provides a dedicated line item for funding the Commission, it did not meet, nor did it receive government funding during the reporting period. (11,28) Likewise, although there is a line item in the MSA's budget for activities to combat human trafficking, funds are disbursed irregularly or not at all. (36)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of adequate funding.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Anti-Trafficking Coordinating Committee for Pointe-Noire (MSA Task Force)	With UNICEF support, coordinates all efforts to address trafficking of West African children in Pointe-Noire. Chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and Solidarity (MSA), with representatives from other government agencies and civil society organizations. (6,14,18) Lack of adequate resources and funding hinder the effective coordination of the MSA's anti-trafficking work. The Task Force has not been granted a specific operating budget since 2014 and did not meet during the reporting period due to lack of funding. (11) In addition, a local NGO has indicated that it refers cases to the Beninese consulate rather than the Task Force because the majority of victims are Beninese and the Task Force is unable to provide the NGO with financial support. (8,36)

Although the ROC has an Anti-Trafficking Coordinating Committee for Pointe-Noire to coordinate efforts to address human trafficking in a geographically limited area, it does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor at the national level.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a national child labor action plan.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Child Protection Action Plan (2022–2026)†	Updated and disseminated by the Legal Directorate for Child Protection under MOJ. Identifies specific measures for the Ministry to pursue in the area of child protection, including assisting child trafficking survivors. (17,40) The Directorate began implementing measures established in the plan during the first quarter of 2022, including human trafficking awareness campaigns in schools in major cities, and information sessions and trainings with the Ministry of Education. Other measures proposed in the plan include undertaking a census of relevant NGOs to improve coordination and providing training for Directorate personnel on human trafficking identification and protection techniques. (17,40)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (36)

In 2021, MSA drafted and disseminated an interagency 2022–2023 National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons. However, the plan lacked final approvals from the Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet, and President during the reporting period. (8,17,41) Research found no evidence of a general policy on child labor. (33) In addition, the government has not included child prevention and elimination efforts in its Education Sector Strategy and research found no activities to implement this strategy during the reporting period. (8,42)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Safety Net Program (<i>Lisungi</i>) and Additional Financing (2014–2027)	World Bank-funded social protection project that provides cash transfers to poor households in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, and Likouala, and encourages children's school attendance and use of health services. (25,43) During the reporting period, the government increased its participation in <i>Lisungi</i> and worked with the World Bank to expand the scope of social safety nets and protections. In 2022, the World Bank also provided an additional \$83 million in funding, increasing the total program budget to \$133 million. (11,25)
UNICEF Study on Street Children and Mobile Children, including Child Trafficking Victims (2021–2022)	A nationwide study conducted by UNICEF in collaboration with MSA, under the aegis of the ROC's National Development Plan (2018–2022). Aimed to provide an evidence base to inform social programs and strengthen child protection efforts, including for child trafficking survivors. (7) Published results in a research report released in June 2022, which includes key data about child labor and child trafficking in the country. (7,17)
Observe, Reflect, Act (ORA) Schools	Ministry of Education program supported by UNICEF, the EU, and World Food Program to improve access to education for indigenous children through a 2- or 3-year program to prepare them for schooling. (8,13,44) Sources indicate that ORA schools are funded primarily by international organizations, private companies, or the local communities, and that teachers are unpaid and work on a voluntary basis. (5,8,13,35,37,45-47)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4)

Existing government programs are not sufficient to address the scope of child labor in all relevant sectors, such as domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. (4)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the ROC (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2015 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the government establishes a formal process for referring children to the appropriate social services when they are found in situations of child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information related to labor and criminal law enforcement statistics, including the funding level for the labor inspectorate, the number and type of labor inspections conducted, violations found, penalties imposed and collected for child labor violations, number of criminal investigations conducted, convictions secured, and penalties imposed.	2014 – 2022
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents, including inspections of employers in rural areas, family enterprises, the informal sector, and those hiring self-employed children.	2022
	Ensure that all criminal law enforcement personnel, including from the police forces, courts, and the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and the Promotion of Indigenous People, are properly trained to know how to identify, recognize, prosecute, and handle worst forms of child labor cases.	2020 – 2022
	Institutionalize training for all labor inspectors, investigators, and law enforcement officers, including offering periodic refresher courses and providing courses on child labor issues.	2014 – 2022
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by ensuring that inspectors have adequate resources to carry out their mandated inspection duties such as unannounced inspections, including access to government vehicles.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that funds budgeted for the National Commission to Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and Solidarity to address human trafficking are regularly disbursed.	2019 – 2022
	Remove barriers to enforcement and prosecution by strengthening the judicial system through improved record-keeping, decreased court backlogs, more frequent hearings, and improved training for criminal law enforcement officials and judges on human trafficking legislation.	2014 – 2022
	Expand criminal law enforcement efforts beyond large cities.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal enforcement agencies such as the National Police are properly funded and do not seek payment from stakeholders to conduct investigations and operations.	2014 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies receive adequate resources, including sufficient funding, to function as intended.	2014 – 2022
	Establish a coordinating mechanism to address child labor, including its worst forms, at the national level.	2009 – 2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Sector Strategy and ensure that policies are implemented.	2009 – 2022
	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant forms of child labor and the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.	2013 – 2022
Social Programs	Improve access to education for all children, including those in non-urban areas, regardless of refugee status or ethnicity, by eliminating all school-related fees, removing linguistic barriers, providing sanitation facilities, building additional schools, training additional teachers, and ensuring that students are not subjected to sexual violence.	2009 – 2022
	Fund and implement social programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including child domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that indigenous children do not experience discrimination or barriers to education, including by raising awareness of tuition waivers available to them and providing instruction in their native languages.	2020 – 2022

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Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in the Cook Islands, in 2022, the government made minimal advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The government partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund to launch the Pacific Islands Inclusive Educational Review to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, have access to quality education. However, the government has not established adequate legal protections to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The law does not criminally prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution; the production of pornography, or pornographic performances; or the use of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. Additionally, while the Cook Islands provides free education to citizens, permanent residents, and children of permanent residents, children outside of these categories must pay a school fee.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides one key indicator on children's education in the Cook Islands.

Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Primary Completion Rate (%)		118.5







Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

The Ministry of Internal Affairs provides support for all related educational mandates, and the Ministry of Education has implemented the Inclusive Education Policy 2017 to ensure that children with disabilities and special learning needs are accommodated within the school system. (2-5) In 2022, the Government of the Cook Islands, in partnership with UNICEF, conducted a survey on the state of inclusive education. (6,7) This survey found that all schools have classrooms that are safe and accessible, and that all schools are equipped with sanitation facilities that are accessible for all. (7)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Cook Islands is self-governing in free association with New Zealand. (8,9) Since 1988, no treaty signed, ratified, accepted, approved, or acceded to by New Zealand extends to the Cook Islands, unless New Zealand acted expressly on behalf of the Cook Islands. (8) The Cook Islands has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 2).

Table 2. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 3). However, gaps exist in the Cook Islands' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of using children in illicit activities.

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Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 30 of the Employment Relations Act (10)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 73(2) of the Employment Relations Act (10)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 73 of the Employment Relations Act; Articles 52 and 53 of the Industrial and Labor Ordinance (10,11)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2–6 of the Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor Ordinance; Articles 109b, 109e, and 109h and 109i of the Crimes Amendment Act (12,13)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 109b, 109e, 109h, and 109i of the Crimes Amendment Act (13)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 109b, 109e, and 109h of the Crimes Amendment Act (13)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 36 and 37 of the Government of New Zealand's Defense Act (14)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 23.1 of the Education Act (15)
Free Public Education	No		Article 22.2 of the Education Act (15)

* Country has no conscription (14)

† Country has no standing military (16)

New Zealand is responsible for the defense of the territory at the Cook Islands' request; therefore, the Islands have no standing military or conscription. (14,16) The Employment Relations Act 2012 prohibits children younger than age 13 from being employed and also prohibits a school-age person, defined as ages 13 to 16, from working during normal school hours, working for more than 10 hours a week outside of school hours, or doing work that is not considered light work. (10) However, the Cook Islands' legal framework does not determine the sectors in which light work is permitted. (10) The law also does not criminalize the use of children in illicit activities, particularly in the production and trafficking of drugs. (10,13) Although the Employee Relations Act prohibits children younger than age 18 from engaging in hazardous occupations, the government has not identified a list of prohibited hazardous occupations for children. (10) Additionally, while the Crimes Amendment Act 2004 prohibits child trafficking, it does not prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including the use or offering of a child for prostitution, the production of pornography, or pornographic performances. Additionally, the use of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs is also not criminally prohibited. (13) While the Cook Islands provides free education to citizens, permanent residents, and children of permanent residents, children outside of these categories must pay a school fee. (15)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the Government of the Cook Islands has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Internal Affairs	Lead agency for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. (8) Made up of multiple divisions, including Labor, Welfare, and Consumer Services, among others. (17) The Labor Division's labor inspectors are responsible for monitoring labor protections, occupational safety, and health; enforcing labor laws; and providing child services. (8, 18) The division has three labor inspectors that handle all matters related to employment and consumer affairs. (8)
Cook Islands Police Service	In conjunction with the Crown Law office, responsible for enforcement of criminal laws against forced child labor, child trafficking, and criminal sexual exploitation. If cases are detected by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, they are referred to the police. (8)

Labor Law Enforcement

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for labor law enforcement actions to address child labor.

Criminal Law Enforcement

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for criminal law enforcement actions to address child labor.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor. However, the Government of the Cook Islands has established policies related to child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	The United Nations Pacific Strategy was a multinational strategic framework program comprising 14 South Pacific nations. The strategy aimed to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. (19) Although the strategy expired in 2022, it is still being supported by the Government of the Cook Islands. (8) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy during the reporting period.

The Cook Islands National Youth Policy (2021–2026) identifies priority areas for youth development, including education and work opportunities, health, and youth risk and resilience. (8, 20) However, the government has not included child labor prevention strategies in the Cook Islands National Youth Policy. (20) In addition, the Cook Islands' National Policy Framework for Children, which ran until 2021, has yet to be replaced but is still in force. (8)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in the Cook Islands (Table 6).

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Table 6. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2022
	Ratify the UN Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2022
	Ensure that the law identifies hazardous occupations or prohibited activities for children.	2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education for all children.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions determine the sectors in which light work is permitted.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the law prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that the National Youth Policy includes provisions to prevent child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that that the National Policy Framework for Children, which expired in 2021, is replaced and enforced.	2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy and that data on these activities are published during the reporting period.	2022

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In 2022, Costa Rica made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government launched a plan to eradicate all forms of child labor in Costa Rica by 2025 and conducted virtual and in-person training to strengthen awareness, prevention, and the culture of reporting on child labor issues. The Office for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Adolescent Worker also provided assistance to minors withdrawn from exploitative labor by referring them to the cash transfer program for adolescent workers. However, children in Costa Rica are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture, including in the production of coffee. Lastly, research indicates that Costa Rica does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out inspection duties and it lacks sufficient financial resources to be able to carry out labor and criminal enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Costa Rica.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	6.5 (46,509)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	98.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	7.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		104.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Picking coffee (3,4)
	Cattle raising, including for the production of milk (3,5,6)
	Fishing,† including shellfish extraction (6-8)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown (6)
	Manufacturing, activities unknown (6)
Services	Working in restaurants, shops, and hotels (6)
	Street vending,† car washing, and repairing motor vehicles (9)
	Domestic work (8-10)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and use in the production of pornography (6,7,11,12)
	Forced labor in the agriculture, construction, fishing, street vending, and commercial sectors (7,13)
	Forced Domestic Labor (7,14)
	Use in transporting or selling drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,12,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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One third of children engaged in child labor in Costa Rica work in agriculture, with the highest incidences of child labor occurring in coastal regions, in the provinces of Limon, Puntarenas, and Guanacaste. (16,17) Children, including migrant children, are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, particularly in tourist destinations, border areas, and in the Northern and Pacific coastal zones. (12,14,18) In addition, migrant children, typically from Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, are subjected to forced labor in agriculture, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation. Migrant, indigenous, and Afro-descendant children are particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation in Costa Rica. (11,12,18)




In June 2023, the National Statistics Institute published the 2022 National Household Survey, which included data on children between the ages of 12 and 17 and found that 0.7 percent of children within this age group were working. (6) This represented an additional decline from the 1.3 percent noted in the 2021 survey. The last comprehensive child labor study that included all relevant age ranges was conducted in 2016. (6)

Although preschool and general basic education are free and compulsory, children in rural areas, girls, LGBTQI+ youth, and children from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities face barriers to education access, including discrimination and gender stereotypes. (19,20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Costa Rica has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Costa Rica's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of prohibitions related to the military recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 3, 78, 92, and 101 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (20)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 and 5 of Law 8922; Article 87 of the Labor Code (21,22)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 94 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 5 of Law 8922; Article 88 of the Labor Code; Articles 5 and 6 of Regulation No. 36640 (20-23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Law No. 9545; Articles 20 and 56 of the Constitution; Article 8 of the Labor Code; Articles 7, 170–172, 189 bis, 192, 376, 381, 383, and 384 of the Penal Code; Article 84 of Regulation No. 36659; Article 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (22,24-27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Law No. 9545; Articles 7, 171, 172, 189 bis, 192, 381, 383, and 384 of the Penal Code; Article 6 of Regulation No. 36659; Articles 5, 7, and 74 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (24-26)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 160, 168, and 170–174 of the Penal Code (24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 7, 188, 381, and 390 of the Penal Code; Article 77 of the Narcotics Law (24,28)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17‡	Articles 57 and 59 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 78 of the Constitution (20,27)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 59 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 8 of the Education Law; Article 78 of the Constitution (20,27,29)

† Country has no standing military. (27)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (20,27)

As Costa Rica's minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (20,27)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS)	Monitors and enforces provisions in the Labor Code related to child labor, including by conducting school visits and worksite inspections. (20) Through the Office for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Adolescent Worker (OATIA), responds to and attempts to prevent child labor through policy development and public awareness campaigns. (30) Also provides referrals for those found to be in exploitative labor to government social services and prepares technical reports to inform policies and programs. (20)
Attorney General's Office	Enforces criminal laws protecting children, including laws prohibiting forced child labor, human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and the use of children in illicit activities. (9,31) Coordinates efforts with the Judicial Investigative Police, the Immigration Police, the Uniformed Police, and municipal police forces. Also coordinates with other government agencies (the National Child Welfare Agency, the Social Security System, the Ministries of Education and Health, the Civil Registry, and other agencies), as well as with NGOs, international organizations, and diplomatic missions. (15)
Judicial Investigative Police	Investigate violations related to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, child commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. (11)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Costa Rica took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient resource allocation.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$8,500,000 (15)	\$8,817,921 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	117 (15)	105 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (15)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	4,566 (15)	7,917 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (15)	3 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	1 (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (15)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (15)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (15)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (15)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (8)

As of October 2022, labor inspectors identified 37 minor workers through inspections, while OATIA identified 150 cases of minors working, including 48 cases of children under 15 years of age while the rest of the cases were of children over 15 years of age found working under hazardous conditions. (6,8) The Office for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Adolescent Worker (OATIA) also reported providing assistance to these minors, by referring them to the Joint Social Welfare Institute (IMAS) so they can benefit from the cash transfer program for adolescent workers (MTSS-IMAS Agreement). (8) Additionally, the Labor Inspection Office identified three infractions related to child labor during worksite inspections, as well as eight illegal dismissals of adolescent workers. (8) Furthermore, the Labor Inspection Office trained 23 labor inspectors on labor laws from July 20 to August 31, 2022, and OATIA trained 90 officials on the worst forms of child labor. (8) However, enforcement of child labor laws, particularly in rural areas and in the informal sector, is reportedly challenging due to insufficient funds for travel, facilities, and per diem costs incurred during inspections. (15,19,32) Informal work is more common in agriculture than in other sectors in Costa Rica. (3,15) The Labor Inspection Office has indicated that it does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (5,19,32-34)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Costa Rica took actions to eliminate child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (15)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	15 (15)	14† (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	5 (15)	2 (8)
Number of Convictions	2 (15)	2 (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (15)	2 (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (8)

† Data are from January 1, 2022, to November 30, 2022.

In 2022, the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) reported 10 cases of human trafficking involving minor victims, including 1 case of labor exploitation, 1 case of domestic servitude, and 4 cases of commercial sexual exploitation. Additionally, as of November 2022, the National Coalition Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking

in Persons (CONATT) Immediate Response Team had confirmed one case of labor exploitation of a child for selling candy in San Jose, one case of domestic servitude of a minor involving a Nicaraguan victim, and one case of a minor forced to sell drugs in Limon. (8) The migration authority, in coordination with CONATT member institutions, conducted virtual and in-person training for 1,060 individuals to strengthen awareness, prevention, and the culture of reporting. According to the CONATT report, this exceeded previously identified training participation goals by 51 percent. (35) In addition, the Costa Rican Tourism Institute conducted 18 virtual and in-person workshops on the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Adolescents from Commercial Sexual Exploitation related to Travel and Tourism. (35) The government also made efforts to reduce the demand for participation in international sex tourism by working with international partners through programs such as the Angel Watch Program to deny entry to 76 foreign-registered sex offenders in 2022. (6)

Reports indicate that the judiciary, prosecutors, and the police require additional staff, training, and resources to identify victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, refer victims to appropriate social services, and investigate, prosecute, and convict perpetrators. (8, 11, 13, 15, 36) In addition, a lack of training and resources for municipal-level authorities hampered the abilities of local governments to respond to cases that could involve the worst forms of child labor. (18) Costa Rica does not have a database to track human trafficking cases, making it difficult to target enforcement and prevention efforts. (13)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of sufficient resources to ensure coordination among relevant agencies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
MTSS Office for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Adolescent Worker (OATIA)	Coordinates government policies and programs to address child labor. (3) Oversees the Interinstitutional Coordinating Protocol for the Protection of Working Minors. (37) In 2022, supported MTSS in the launch of the Roadmap to Make Costa Rica a Country Free of Child Labor and Its Worst Forms 2021–2025. (8) Furthermore, it continued implementing projects in the Talamanca and Valle la Estrella areas in the territories of indigenous and African-descent within the Limon province to develop interinstitutional actions, provide direct assistance to the working minor populations, and refer them to local municipalities, education sector, and other resources that assist parents and members of the community with livelihood projects. It also benefited 130 working minors from the Huetar Caribbean region by providing conditional cash transfers of \$120 per month to individuals under 18 years of age who work in conditions of poverty or extreme poverty. (8) Additionally, during the reporting period it provided training to 232 government officials and 41 individuals from the business sector through a virtual course entitled "Let's make a difference and protect the rights of working minors!" (8)

Reports indicate that coordination is lacking among institutions responsible for investigating the worst forms of child labor and those providing social services to victims. (15) OATIA has reported that its office needs additional staff to better assist children engaged in child labor and their families. In addition, OATIA lacks adequate transportation resources, which limits its ability to provide oversight of child labor programs. (6, 31)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Roadmap to Make Costa Rica a Country Free of Child Labor and Its Worst Forms (2021–2025)†	Launched on April 25, 2022, and aims to eradicate all forms of child labor in Costa Rica by 2025 by strengthening efforts to identify and track hazardous child labor, and by increasing social awareness and collaborative efforts to address child labor. (8,15,38)
National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons (2020–2030)	Outlines goals and actions in the area of preventing and combating human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, as well as strengthening human trafficking investigations and sanctioning criminals. (39,40) In 2022, the government continued implementing this policy. (6)
Interinstitutional Coordinating Protocol for the Protection of Working Minors	Outlines provision of services for child laborers through collaboration between MTSS, the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI), the Ministry of Public Education, and the Joint Social Welfare Institute (IMAS), as well as their regional and local agencies and the private sector. (41) Reports indicate that the government continued carrying out activities implementing this policy during the reporting period. (6)

† Policy was launched during the reporting period.

In 2022, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy launched the new National Development Plan 2023–2026. (8) The plan establishes seven national goals related to economic growth, public debt, unemployment, poverty, inequality, citizen security, and decarbonization. The plan also includes a section on welfare, labor, and social inclusion with elements related to child protection and addressing the root causes of child labor. (6,8)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the accessibility of programs to all relevant groups.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Bridge to Development†	Aims to reduce poverty and eliminate vulnerability, including child labor, by providing social services to families in poor communities. (42,43) In 2022, the government reported the program was still active and that since its inception it had served 113,000 families. (6)
Houses of Joy (<i>Casas de la Alegría</i>)†	Public-private initiative that seeks to protect and contribute to the development and social inclusion of children, particularly migrant and indigenous children, while their parents and relatives are working in the coffee harvest. (4,6,44) The centers offer free childcare, healthcare, meals, and social protection services and mitigate the risk of child labor on coffee plantations. (6) IMAS funds meals, caregiver salaries, and training; farm owners provide the land and classrooms, with financial contributions from UNICEF for building and teaching materials. (19,44) The program continued in 2022, and during the reporting period expanded to a total of 30 centers. (6,8)
Let's Get Ahead Program (<i>Avancemos</i>)†	IMAS program that provides monthly conditional cash transfers to low-income families to keep children in school and out of exploitative work. (3,45) Reporting indicates that this program was active during the reporting period. (6)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Costa Rica.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (46–48)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Costa Rica (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 17 to align with the compulsory education age.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2017 – 2022
	Allocate sufficient resources to ensure routine labor inspections in rural areas and the informal sector, including child labor inspections, particularly in agriculture.	2015 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 105 to 167 to ensure adequate coverage for the labor force of approximately 2.5 million people.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the judiciary, prosecutors, municipal authorities, and the police have sufficient staff, training, and resources to investigate, prosecute, and convict perpetrators of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, and identify victims of child trafficking and refer them to appropriate social services.	2017 – 2022
	Develop a mechanism to properly track human trafficking cases to improve enforcement and prevention efforts.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Strengthen coordination and information sharing between institutions responsible for investigating child labor and providing social services to victims.	2015 – 2022
	Increase transportation and human resources for the Office for the Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Adolescent Worker so that the office can improve program oversight.	2015 – 2022
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including children in rural areas, girls, LGBTQI+ youth, children from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, and migrant children.	2015 – 2022

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In 2022, Côte d'Ivoire made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ivorian government conducted 9,471 inspections, a 234 percent increase from the previous year, and recruited 100 additional child labor agents to track instances of child labor on cocoa farms and in production zones. The government also officially created the National Sustainable Cocoa Committee (Comité National du Cacao Durable), which is designed to implement the National Strategic Plan to address deforestation, child labor, and the low incomes of cocoa farmers. In addition, the government opened 91 new secondary schools, 517 new primary schools, and 227 new preschools during the reporting period. However, children in Côte d'Ivoire are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in the harvesting of cocoa and coffee. The government does not have a mechanism to assess civil penalties for labor law violations, and the lack of financial resources and personnel may have hindered labor law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Côte d'Ivoire. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report. In addition, NORC at the University of Chicago released a report detailing findings from a sectorally representative survey conducted in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire during the cocoa harvesting season of 2018–2019. This report found an increase in child labor (and hazardous child labor) in cocoa production during the 10-year timeframe since the survey in 2008–2009. (1)

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	25.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	70.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	21.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		79.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (2)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS 5), 2016. (3)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of cocoa, including burning† and clearing fields;† cutting down trees† to expand cocoa plantations; exposure to agrochemicals;† harvesting, drying, and fermenting cocoa beans; using sharp tools to break pods;† and transporting heavy loads† of cocoa pods and water (1,4-9)
	Production of cereals and coffee, including applying chemical fertilizers,† spraying pesticides,† cutting down trees,† and burning† and clearing fields† (5,6,10,11)
	Production of palm oil, honey, cashews, and rubber (5-7,9,12,13)
	Fishing, including deep sea diving;† repairing and hauling nets; and cleaning,† salting, drying, descaling, and selling fish (5,6,11)
	Production of charcoal† (10)
	Forestry (7,9,14)

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Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Mining,† including crushing and transporting stones, blasting rocks, digging, working underground, sieving, and extracting gold with mercury or cyanide (6,7,11,15)
	Manufacturing, including repairing automobiles (7,11)
	Construction,† activities unknown (11)
Services	Domestic work (3,5-7,9,11,16)
	Working in transportation and carrying goods‡ (4,6,7,9-11,17)
	Street vending and commerce (5-7,9-11,15,17)
	Work in restaurants (5,9,12,15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Mining, carpentry, construction, domestic work, street vending, restaurants, and agriculture, including in the production of cocoa, coffee, cotton, and rubber, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,6,7,9,10,12)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,7,9,13,15)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (9,18)
	Begging as <i>talibés</i> by Koranic teachers, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (19)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Due to security issues in both Mali and Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire has an estimated 13,214 refugees (2,489 households), of which an estimated 59 percent are children. Children are also brought to Côte d'Ivoire from those countries for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, including in begging, cocoa production, and artisanal mining. (5,9,10,12,16,20) Children from Côte d'Ivoire are also subjected to human trafficking for forced labor in domestic work within the country and North Africa. (5,9,10,12,16,20)

School is mandatory for children ages 6 to 16 in Côte d'Ivoire. Although the Law on Education provides for free education, students are often required to pay for textbooks and uniforms, which may be prohibitive to some families. (5,7,21-24) In addition, birth registration or identity documents are required for students to take entrance exams for secondary school, posing a barrier to continued education beyond the primary level. (6,9,25)




A shortage of teachers, poor school infrastructure, lack of transportation systems in rural areas, and inadequate sanitation facilities have negatively impacted children's ability to attend school. (5,6,9) Research also suggests that some students are physically and sexually abused at school, which may deter some students from attending school. Because of this, roughly one in four girls in Côte d'Ivoire are not able to attend primary school. (5,7,26,27) In addition, there remains insufficient classroom space in rural areas for the number of students enrolled. (7)

Results from the International Cocoa Initiatives' Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System indicate that the number children working in hazardous working conditions increased, which is at least partially attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. (28) Research showed that despite an upward spike in child labor during the partial government shutdown as a reaction to the pandemic, in cocoa-producing areas the level of child labor returned to pre-pandemic levels at the end of the partial government shut down. (29) Research also indicates that between 2008 and 2019, there were significant increases in cocoa production and, during that time, child labor in high-producing zones remained stable. However, in small- and medium-producing zones, child labor increased. (1,8) During this time, however, there was an increase in children attending schools in cocoa-growing areas. (1,8)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Côte d'Ivoire has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 23.2 of the Labor Code; Article 16 of the Constitution (22,30)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 4 of the Prohibitions of Hazardous Work List (31)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 5–11 of the Prohibitions of Hazardous Work List; Articles 6 and 19 of the Prohibition of Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor Law (31,32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 5 of the Constitution; Articles 4, 6, 7, 11–14, 20–23, and 4 and 8 of the Prohibition of Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor Law; Article 3 of the Labor Code (22,30,32)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 5 of the Constitution; Articles 11, 12, 20–22, and 26 of the Prohibition of Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor Law; Article 370 of the Penal Code; Articles 4.4 and 6 of the Anti-Trafficking Law (22,32-34)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 5–11 of the Prohibitions of Hazardous Work List, Articles 8, 9, 15, and 24–29 of the Prohibition of Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor Law; Articles 4.4 and 6 of the Anti-Trafficking Law (31,32,34)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 4 and 30 of the Prohibition of Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor Law (32)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 56.4 of the Armed Forces Code; Articles 7, 8 and 18 of the Law Determining the Conditions for Entering the Military (35,36)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 56.4 of the Armed Forces Code (35)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 4 and 31 of the Prohibition of Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor Law (32)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 10 of the Constitution; Article 2.1 of the Law on Education (22-24)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 2 of the Law on Education (24)

* Country has no conscription (36,37)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment and Social Protection (MEPS)	Develops, proposes, and enforces all labor laws, including those related to child labor. (5,7,38,39) The Anti-Trafficking Unit, a Sub-Directorate, and the Ministry of Women, Family, and Children provide support to survivors of child trafficking and other forms of child labor. (5,16) MEPS has authority over the child labor monitoring system (<i>Système d'Observation et de Suivi du Travail des Enfants en Côte d'Ivoire</i> [SOSTECl]), which enables communities to collect and analyze statistical data on the worst forms of child labor. As of 2022, there are 20,000 local SOSTECl committees in operation for the purpose of improving local coordination and exchange of information on child labor and child welfare in cocoa production areas. (5-7,11,17) The General Labor Directorate in Abidjan coordinates the regional offices and their efforts to address child labor. (7,18,40)
Ministry of the Interior and Security	Through its Anti-Trafficking Unit, leads efforts to enforce criminal laws against child trafficking. Through its Vice Squads (<i>Brigades Mondaine</i>), addresses commercial sexual exploitation, including the exploitation of children. (5,9) Through its Unit for Combating Transnational Organized Crime, supports UNODC's West African Coast Initiative, which aims to improve cross-border cooperation to address crimes, including human trafficking. (37,41)
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights	Investigates and prosecutes crimes related to child labor, including its worst forms. Through its Directorate of Judicial Protection of Childhood and Youth, assists with investigations and implements the ministry's child protection policy. (5,9) The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights is charged with rehabilitating children who have been detained or arrested. (7)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Côte d'Ivoire took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$305,588 (6)	\$305,600 (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	310 (6)	344 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (30)	No (30)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	2,836 (6)	9,471 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (6)	0 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (6)	N/A (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (6)	N/A (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (30)	Yes (30)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (9)

During the reporting period, the government recruited 100 additional child labor agents to track instances of child labor on cocoa farms and production zones, though these agents have not begun working in the field as of yet. In addition, the government also provided motorcycles, fuel, and computers to 30 local labor inspectorates to help with inspections throughout the country. (9)

Research indicates that Côte d'Ivoire does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (42) The labor inspectorate suffers from a lack of resources, including insufficient staff. (6,38,39) While some labor inspections are done in the informal sector, the majority of the inspections are done in the formal sector, in which child labor is less likely to occur. (7,9,43)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Côte d'Ivoire took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	789 (9)	832 (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	789 (9)	587 (9)
Number of Convictions	594 (9)	392 (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (9)

During the reporting period, Ivoirian Police Forces arrested four child traffickers and rescued nine Togolese minors, all of whom were under 18 years old. The accused in this case are still awaiting trial. (9) However, the Anti-Trafficking Unit continued to lack the resources and personnel to adequately enforce criminal child labor laws throughout the country. (6,9)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Monitoring Committee on Actions to Combat Trafficking, Exploitation, and Child Labor (CNS)	Supervises, monitors, and evaluates all government activities related to child labor and child trafficking, including making policy recommendations and harmonizing laws with international conventions. Chairs the Interministerial Committee for the Fight against Trafficking, Exploitation, and Child Labor (CIM), and provides medical and social assistance to survivors of child labor and trafficking. (5,44,45) Chaired by the First Lady of Côte d'Ivoire, and comprises both international and domestic partners. (5,15,16,44,46) During the reporting period, CNS reported that 2,116 children (1,576 boys, and 540 girls) were removed from situations of trafficking, exploitation, violence, and child labor. Once these children were removed, they were evaluated by social workers who could help determine the type of care they needed. (9) The type of care provided included shelters, healthcare, and educational and psychological services. (9)

During the reporting period, the government officially created the National Sustainable Cocoa Committee (*Comité National du Cacao Durable*), which is designed to implement the National Strategic Plan to address deforestation, child labor, and low incomes of cocoa farmers. (9)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking, Exploitation, and Child Labor (2019–2023)	Coordinated by CNS and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the fight against Trafficking, Exploitation, and Child Labor, which aims to significantly reduce the number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor by drawing on best practices and building on lessons learned from the implementation of previous national action plans. Priorities include increasing efforts to mobilize resources at the national level, reinforcing regional cooperation and public-private partnerships, incorporating worst forms of child labor considerations into national and sector-specific programming, and reinforcing the monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy for the fight against human trafficking and the worst forms of child labor. (47) During the reporting period, the policy remained active and continued all of its previous efforts. (9)

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Policy	Description & Activities
Policies Involving SOSTECL	Aim to strengthen and expand SOSTECL. Includes a partnership agreement between the International Cocoa Initiative and CNS in support of the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking, Exploitation, and Child Labor. (5) The Decent Work Country Program (2017–2020), in collaboration with ILO, aimed to improve working conditions, strengthen SOSTECL, and address the worst forms of child labor. (48,49) The National Development Plan (2016–2020) allocated almost \$6.1 million over 5 years to conduct diagnostic studies on child labor and child trafficking, construct three child protection centers, and develop a national action plan to address human trafficking, particularly of girls. (50) During the reporting period, the government organized multiple workshops on SOSTECL in high-risk areas which included Nawa, Vavoua, Minignan, Bagoué, Sassandra, Bouna, San-Pedro, Issia, Haut Sassandra, and Toumodi. (9)
Labor Inspection Strategy (2019–2023)	Through the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, with assistance from ILO, aims to enable the government to ensure the application of legal provisions for the improvement of working conditions and the removal of children from work through the inspection of worksites, the provision of counseling, and monitoring. (14,43) In 2022, undertook activities related to building the capacity of the inspectors, monitoring inspection units, and raising public awareness. (9)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (51)

During the reporting period, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, along with EU stakeholders, supported the Alliance on Sustainable Cocoa, which creates an outline for improving the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of cocoa production and trade, including eliminating child labor. (52,53)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
ACCEL AFRICA	The program was co-funded by the EU, under the Project "Accelerate action for the elimination of child labor in Africa's supply chains" (<i>Accélérer l'action pour l'élimination du travail des enfants dans les chaînes d'approvisionnement en Afrique</i> , or ACCEL AFRICA). UNICEF and ILO representatives provided participants with strategies for synchronizing efforts to eradicate child labor. (54) During the reporting period, the government organized a workshop on child labor for 50 labor inspectors. (9)
Industry-Funded Projects	Aim to increase sustainability in the cocoa sector, improve farmer livelihoods and access to education—including increasing access to education opportunities for children—and address the worst forms of child labor in cocoa-growing areas. Some projects support the spirit of the 2010 Declaration. (48) In November 2017, the Governments of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire signed an agreement to fight deforestation and protect the cocoa supply chain. During the reporting period, the government partnered with private sector companies to implement the Cocoa for Good Strategy, a \$500 million investment to make cocoa production in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire more sustainable and transparent. (48,52,55) In addition, private industry continued to implement the Cocoa and Forests Initiative to this end. (52,55)
World Bank-Funded Projects	Aim to improve access to education and provide poverty relief. Includes the Productive Social Safety Net (2015–2024), which has supported 127,000 beneficiary households (representing 766,253 individuals), of which 47,435 are women, the main recipients of the cash transfers. In addition, the Unique Social Registry currently counts 315,925 poor and vulnerable individuals, while progress is being made in terms of timely digital payments to beneficiaries. (56,57)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (6)

In 2022, the government signed the U.S.-Côte d'Ivoire Child Protection Compact Partnership, a non-binding multi-year \$10 million plan to address child sex trafficking and forced child labor in Côte d'Ivoire. The government also opened 91 new secondary schools, 517 new primary schools, and 227 new preschools during the reporting period. (9,13) In addition, the government increased its education budget by 11 percent from \$1.8 million to \$1.97 million in 2022, and increased its social services program budget, which addresses social inequalities and looks to reduce poverty, to \$5.5 billion. Moreover, the government continued its national project

to map the locations of cocoa farms throughout the country. (9,13) Approximately 350,000 out of the estimated 993,000 cocoa farmers have registered. Finally, to address the issue of birth registration, the government partnered with UNICEF to implement new birth registration mechanisms to ensure that children are registered immediately at birth, or during vaccination campaigns. (9,13) Because of this, the government decreased the number of children without birth certificates from 914,913 students in 2020–2021 to 672,010 students in 2022. (9,25)

Despite an increase in activities, the scope of existing programs, including in cocoa, is insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem in Côte d'Ivoire. (5,6) Current programming is not expansive enough, evidenced by the fact the child labor prevalence rate has not declined. The industry-funded NORC report released in October 2020 found that programs like the Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System, access to quality to education, and programs to increase farmer yields and household income need to be scaled and expanded to impact more families. (1)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Côte d'Ivoire (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Establish a mechanism to assess penalties for child labor violations.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives a sufficient amount of funding to conduct inspections and investigations throughout the country, including in the informal sector.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies receive the resources and personnel needed to adequately enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 344 to 624 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 9.4 million people.	2009 – 2022
Social Programs	Improve the accessibility and transportation capacity of schools; ensure that schools are free of physical and sexual abuse; and increase the number of teachers, textbooks, sanitation facilities, and schools, particularly in rural areas. Ensure that all children have access to birth registration and identity documents.	2011 – 2022
	Expand existing programs, including the Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System, and institute new ones aimed at addressing the full scope of the child labor problem in Côte d'Ivoire, including outside the cocoa sector.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that survivors of the worst forms of child labor are able to access social services throughout the country.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that there are sufficient classrooms available for all students enrolled.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Djibouti made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government signed a presidential decree mandating the establishment of the National Committee to Fight Against Trafficking and Similar Practices and, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, established and opened the Center for Unaccompanied Children and Vulnerable Migrants, which provides mental health and medical support, legal assistance, shelter, food, and clothes to vulnerable young migrants. The Ministry of Women and Families also conducted a study on children living in the street in Djibouti City, which included information about the prevalence and conditions of forced child labor. However, children in Djibouti are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in street work. Minimum age provisions apply only to children with a formal employment contract, which does not comply with international standards. In addition, the government did not make adequate efforts to enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor due to a lack of financial and human resource allocations and reporting mechanisms. Finally, the government did not publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Djibouti. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		64.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Caring for livestock, including goats (3)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown (4)
Services	Domestic work, [†] activities unknown (4-6)
	Street work, including vending, shining shoes, washing cars, and begging (4,6-8)
	Working in restaurants, small shops, and family businesses (4-6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9)
	Forced domestic work and begging (6,9-12)
	Use in illicit activities, including the selling of marijuana (3)

[†] Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Continued conflict between Russia and Ukraine—which, together, account for the majority of Djibouti's wheat imports—and continued drought in the region have led to rural workers losing livelihoods and rising commodity prices throughout the country. Reports claim that this has subjected roughly 49,000 women and children to

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higher risks of labor exploitation, including child labor, and has greatly increased the risk of children dropping out of school. (13) Djibouti is vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate, and children will become increasingly vulnerable to exploitation as the country experiences more climate change-related weather events and trends such as droughts, floods, and sea level rise. (14)




Reports suggest that children, including undocumented migrant girls, are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation in Djibouti City, along the Ethiopia-Djibouti trucking corridor, and in Obock, the primary point of arrival and departure for Yemen. (9,12) Djibouti is a common transit country for mixed-migration flows from Ethiopia, Yemen, the East Africa region, and the Arabian Peninsula, and children from these regions are vulnerable to exploitation. (4,8,12) During the reporting period, the Ministry for Women and Families conducted a study on over 1,000 children forced to beg in Djibouti City, revealing that an overwhelming majority of the children—over 90 percent—were from Ethiopia and Somalia. (6)

During the reporting period, the government completed and inaugurated a new kindergarten school in the Markazi refugee camp. Girls, children living in rural Djibouti, children with disabilities, children in nomadic families, and child refugees continue to have low rates of school enrollment, making these children more vulnerable to child labor. (15-18) Although primary and middle schools are tuition free, other school-related expenses may prevent children from attending school. (19) Requirements for documentation and birth registration can be barriers to accessing education because in practice, migrant children and refugees without UNHCR documentation cannot attend public schools, and children in rural areas and street children without birth documents can attend school but cannot take exams. (6) For children born in rural areas and street children, there is often a financial barrier in obtaining birth documentation later in childhood, preventing them from accessing all benefits of public schooling and thus increasing their vulnerability to child labor. (5,6,20) Registered refugee children are integrated into local schools while undocumented migrant children and refugees awaiting status determination have access to schools in refugee camps. (4,6)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Djibouti has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Djibouti's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibitions related to the use of a child for prostitution.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Article 5 of the Labor Code (21)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 108 and 110 of the Labor Code (21)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 110 of the Labor Code (21)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 290 of the Labor Code; Article 23 of the Law Regarding Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes (21,22)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1 and 5–7 of the Law on the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons and the Illegal Smuggling of Migrants; Article 23 of the Law Regarding Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes (22,23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 394, 396, 462, and 463 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 5–8 of the Law on the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons and the Illegal Smuggling of Migrants (23,24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 355, 356, and 461 of the Penal Code (24)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 1 of the National Army Amendment Decree (25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 149–151 and 461 of the Penal Code (24)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 4 and 14 of the Law on the Orientation of the Education System (26)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 16 of the Law on the Orientation of the Education System (26)

* Country has no conscription (27)

The Labor Code's minimum age provision applies only to children who perform work under a formal employment agreement, which does not conform to international standards requiring the protection of all children under the law establishing a minimum age for work. (21,24) In addition, while Djibouti's Labor Code contains a hazardous work list, it only applies to domestic work, work in hotels, and work in bars, omitting hazardous activities like street work, in which children are known to be engaged in the country. Article 111 in the Labor Code grants authority to the Minister of Labor to publish a hazardous work list enumerating additional hazardous sectors, which has not yet been done. (21,24) Furthermore, laws do not specifically criminalize the use of a child for prostitution. (23,24)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforces all labor laws, including child labor laws and regulations. (10) Through its General Inspectorate of Labor and Social Laws, regulates youth employment. (5)
Criminal Enforcement Agencies	Enforces criminal laws and investigates crimes related to child labor through the Djibouti National Police, including the Brigade for Minors. (10) Through the National Commission on Human Rights receives complaints and investigates cases of human rights violations, including child labor. (28) Assists survivors in obtaining legal aid to prosecute violators. (28)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes child labor cases referred by MOL. (10)

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Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Djibouti took actions to address child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$112,994 (4)	Unknown (29)
Number of Labor Inspectors	5 (4)	5 (4,29)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (21)	Yes (6,21)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (6,29)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	6 (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	14 (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (4)	Unknown (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (6,29)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (21)	Yes (21)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (4)	No (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (4)	No (4)

Previous years' reports show that the labor inspectorate conducts an exceptionally low number of worksite inspections, which may impede the enforcement of child labor laws. The enforcement of child labor laws is also challenging due to a lack of child labor-specific training for inspectors and minimal resources for transportation, limiting the inspectorate's ability to conduct inspections outside of Djibouti City. (4) While the law includes a mechanism to impose monetary civil penalties, in practice, the labor inspectorate currently issues warning letters outlining how to remedy the situation in order to avoid a penalty. There is no formal mechanism to refer children found during labor inspections to appropriate social services. (4,6)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Djibouti took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	Unknown (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	Unknown (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (4)

Research indicates that NGOs in Djibouti communicate human trafficking indicators to the police, who refer these cases to the prosecutor's office. (3,30) During the reporting period, the government did not provide information on criminal law enforcement for inclusion in this report.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including clarity of institutional coordination mandates among government ministries to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Council for Children	Assesses progress on issues pertaining to children and proposes policy and strategic guidelines. (8,31) Headed by the Prime Minister and includes public stakeholders, civil society partners, associations, and non-governmental organizations involved in the field of childhood. (31) Research was unable to determine whether the National Council for Children was active during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the government mandated the establishment of a National Committee to Fight Against Human Trafficking and Similar Practices, intended to prioritize the issue of trafficking in persons and to mandate a comprehensive, inter-ministerial approach to preventing and eliminating trafficking in persons. (6,29,32) However, while various bodies coordinate efforts to address child protection and trafficking in persons, research was unable to determine if there were other active coordinating bodies dedicated to preventing and eliminating other forms of child labor. (4,5,33)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a policy to address child labor in its worst forms.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (2015–2022)	Aims to strengthen the legislative framework to address and prevent human trafficking, protect and assist human trafficking survivors, and establish a national referral mechanism between law enforcement officials and social services providers. (34) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons during the reporting period.
Child Protection Policies	Includes the National Child Policy (2022–2032), which sets out fundamental rights for children—including the right to education and the right to health—and mobilizes national resources toward these ends. (35) The National Strategic Plan for Childhood in Djibouti (2022–2026) provides political and strategic guidelines for implementing the country's child protection policy. (29,36) Both policies are coordinated by the Ministry of Women and the Family. (35) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement these policies during the reporting period.
National Strategy for Migration	Promotes aid and livelihoods for migrants in Djibouti and raises awareness for the rights and humanitarian needs of migrants. Facilitates coordination between humanitarian partners and the government through the National Coordination Office for Migration. (37) Launched in 2021 with the assistance of the IOM. (37) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Strategy for Migration during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (18,36,38)

During the reporting period, the Government of Djibouti approved and implemented the Master Plan for Education and Training (2021–2035) and its implementation plan, the Action Plan for Education and Training (2021–2025). These plans aim to expand inclusive and equitable education to all children in Djibouti, increase access to vocational training, achieve universal basic education, and to develop the preschool education system. (18,29,36) The plans bring together various ministries to ensure cohesive implementation, planning, and monitoring of their programs. (17) The Ministry of Social Affairs and Solidarity, in partnership with an international NGO, performed an evaluation of the National Social Protection Strategy (2018–2022) to develop terms of reference for the creation of a new strategy. The original strategy sought to broaden social protections for vulnerable Djiboutians, including children and youth from families experiencing poverty, by collecting data on the needs of these children and calling for increased investments in child welfare. (38,39) Despite these efforts, research found no evidence of a comprehensive policy to address all forms of child labor. (4,29)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Ministry of Women and Families Programs†	Includes programs developed to provide children and families from vulnerable groups with resources to reduce their economic and social vulnerabilities, such as: the Social Assistance Program, which provides children and their families with education and in-kind support; the Support Project for Girls and Women in Precarious Situations, a multi-sectoral program which provides girls with education and training; the Country Strategic Option Program (2019–2024), a rural poverty-reduction program; and Djibouti's Support Program for Children with Academic Difficulties, a program providing academic support for children from low-income families. (40,41) An NGO implements a memoranda of understanding with the Ministry of Women and Families and the National Commission of Human Rights to provide psycho-social support and monitoring for children housed at an overnight shelter. (42) During the reporting period, the Ministry developed a guide on foster families with NGO partners, focused on minimizing child abuse, exploitation, and abandonment. (17)
IOM Center for Unaccompanied Children and Vulnerable Migrants*	Established during the reporting year as a result of a partnership between the IOM, the Ministry for Women and Family, and the Ministry of the Interior. Provides mental health services, medical support, legal assistance, and basic needs to young and child migrants, who are often vulnerable to exploitation. (6,32,43) Established in conjunction with the National Referencing Mechanism for Trafficking Victims, which allows civil society organizations and NGOs to refer people impacted by human trafficking directly to law enforcement agencies. During the reporting year, the Center provided shelter and services to 21 Ethiopian migrant children in Djibouti. (6,32)
World Bank-Funded Programs	The Integrated Cash Transfer and Human Capital Project, which ended in 2022, sought to expand the social safety net system and provide basic services in targeted poor communities, primarily through conditional cash transfers. (5,44,45) The Expanding Opportunities for Learning Project (2019–2024), a \$30 million project, supports Djibouti's efforts to expand access to quality education for 35,000 at-risk or underserved children, including girls, refugees, and disabled students. The Government of Djibouti and the International Development Association (IDA) co-finance the program, which aims to expand access to and improve retention in primary and lower secondary education for disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups. (46,47) The project also plans to build the capacity of teachers and administrators in underserved areas. (46,48,49) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement these programs during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Djibouti.

‡ The government had other programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (17,39,50)

Research found no evidence of programs to assist children involved in domestic work, street work, and commercial sexual exploitation. (6)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Djibouti (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children are afforded minimum age for work protections under the law, including children working outside formal employment relationships.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include sectors in which child labor is known to occur and that expose children to abuse, injury, unhealthy environments, and particularly difficult conditions including street work.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of children in prostitution.	2012 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish complete labor law enforcement information, including funding of the labor inspectorate, the number of labor inspections conducted in total and at worksite, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of penalties imposed and collected.	2021 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism for the Ministry of Labor to receive child labor complaints.	2010 – 2022
	Establish a reciprocal referral mechanism between the labor inspectorate and social services to protect and rehabilitate children involved in child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has the necessary equipment, including adequate transportation, to conduct labor inspections in all regions.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that civil penalties for child labor violations are imposed and collected.	2021 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish complete criminal law enforcement data, including training for criminal investigators, number of investigations, number of violations, number of prosecutions, number of convictions, and number of penalties imposed.	2021 – 2022
	Institutionalize child labor-focused trainings for all labor inspectors, including by training new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment, as well as providing refresher courses throughout their employment.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Council for Children is active and able to carry out its intended mandate of assessing progress on issues pertaining to children and proposing child-related policy and strategic guidelines.	2009 – 2022
	Establish a coordinating body dedicated to preventing and eliminating all forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor, including the National Strategic Plan for Childhood and the National Strategy for Migration, and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis.	2017 – 2022
	Adopt a comprehensive national policy to address all forms of child labor, including its worst forms.	2016 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children in rural areas, including girls, by removing school-related expenses.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that all children, including refugees, asylum seekers, and children in rural areas have access to education by removing barriers to obtaining national birth certificates or UNHCR refugee documentation to attend school.	2019 – 2022
	Implement programs to specifically address children involved in domestic work, street work, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement all social programs related to child labor, including the Expanding Opportunities for Learning Project, and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis.	2022

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Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in Dominica, in 2022, the government made minimal advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor, including fundraising for the Education Trust Fund and providing meals to students. However, the government's ability to prevent children from being subjected to the worst forms of child labor is limited because existing laws do not determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children and the government has not enacted laws explicitly prohibiting the use of children in pornography. In addition, information on Dominica's criminal law enforcement efforts was not publicly released.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides one key indicator on children's education in Dominica.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Primary Completion Rate (%)		101.8




Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021 published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Children from the Kalinago community face barriers to accessing secondary education, including a lack of schools and long travel outside of the territory to attend school, which could make them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (2-4)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Dominica has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 2).

Table 2. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 3). However, gaps exist in Dominica's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for hazardous work.

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Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 2 and 46 of the Education Act (5)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	14	Articles 2, 4, and 5 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (6)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 2, 4, 5, and 7(1) of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (6)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 4 of the Constitution; Sections 2, 8, 10, and 13 of the Transnational Organized Crime (Prevention and Control) Act (7,8)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Sections 2, 8, 10, and 13 of the Transnational Organized Crime (Prevention and Control) Act (8)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 2, 8, 10, and 13 of the Transnational Organized Crime (Prevention and Control) Act; Article 18 of the Sexual Offenses Act (8,9)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 16(5) of the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) Act (10)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 2 and 27 of the Education Act (5)
Free Public Education	No		Articles 15 and 16 of the Education Act (5)

† Country has no standing military (11)

Pursuant to Section 7(1) of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act, children under age 18 are prohibited from working at night, unless they are working with family members. However, the law does not otherwise prohibit the employment of children in work that is likely to jeopardize their health, safety, or morals. (6) Specifically, Dominica does not have national laws or regulations that comprehensively define the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. The government also has not established a sufficient minimum age of 18 for hazardous work. (8) Moreover, Article 46 of the Education Act prohibits the employment of children ages 5 to 16 during the school year, but allows students ages 14 and older to work during school vacations or in school-sponsored employment training programs without defining the conditions, specific activities, or number of hours permissible for light work. (5) Dominica's laws related to forced labor are not sufficient because they do not criminally prohibit forced labor except when it results from human trafficking. In addition, laws related to child trafficking are not sufficient because they are limited to international human trafficking. (8) The law does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation because the use of children in prostitution, pornography, and pornographic performances is not criminally prohibited. (3) Further, the law criminalizing the use of children as carriers for drug trafficking is insufficient because it does not cover the use, procuring, and offering of children for the production and trafficking of drugs. (10) Laws providing for free basic education do not meet international standards because they permit schools to charge tuition fees for some students who reside in Dominica but are not citizens. (5)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the government has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Labor Division, Ministry of National Security and Legal Affairs*	Documents and investigates cases involving child labor and refers violations to the Dominica Police Force and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Refers cases to the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Community Development, which have limited social welfare and outreach programs. (12) In December 2022, Dominica created the Ministry of Labor, Public Service Reform, Social Partnership, Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development. At this time, it has not been reported what responsibilities the Ministry will take over from the Labor Division in the Ministry of Justice, Immigration and National Security. (12)
Police Force	Enforces criminal laws, including those related to child labor. (12)

* Agency responsible for child labor enforcement was created during the reporting period.

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Dominica took actions to address child labor. (12)

Table 5. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$185,000 (12)	\$185,000 (12)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (13)	Unknown (12)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (14)	Yes (14)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (13)	Unknown (12)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (13)	Unknown (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (13)	0 (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (13)	N/A (12)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (13)	N/A (12)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (13)	Unknown (12)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (13)	Unknown (12)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (14)	Yes (12, 14)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (13)	Unknown (12)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (13)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (13)	Yes (12)

Labor inspectors can conduct unannounced inspections at worksites in any sector at any time. (12, 14) Labor Inspectorate funding was approximately \$185,000, which was the same funding level as the previous year and is used for salaries, allowances, travel, supplies, and operations and maintenance services. (12)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Dominica took actions to address child labor. (12)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor.

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor. However, in 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 6), although gaps exist in these programs, including a lack of implementation.

Table 6. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Basic Needs Trust Fund	Caribbean Development Bank-implemented program supervised by the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs, Family, and Gender Affairs that aims to reduce poverty through livelihood services, improved infrastructure, capacity-building projects, and technical services. (15) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Basic Needs Trust Fund during the reporting period.
Education Trust Fund†	Government-funded program implemented by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to provide financial assistance for textbooks, transportation, registration, and exam fees to students in secondary school who would otherwise be unable to complete their education. (12) The Dollar Day fundraiser was held during the reporting period. (16)
School Feeding Program‡	Government-funded program implemented by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to provide lunch to primary school students in targeted areas. Active during the reporting period. (12)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Dominica.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4,17-23)

There is no evidence of current research on the worst forms of child labor in Dominica.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in Dominica (Table 7).

Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Define the conditions, activities, and number of hours permissible for light work.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the minimum age for hazardous work is age 18 for all children.	2015 – 2022
	Determine and codify the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2018 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the use of children in forced labor.	2019 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit domestic child trafficking.	2019 – 2022
	Enact legislation to specifically prohibit using, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution, the production of pornography, and pornographic performances.	2011 – 2022
	Prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that laws providing free basic education include all children in Dominica, including non-citizens.	2022
	Collect and publish labor law enforcement data, including information on the number of labor inspectors, number and type of inspections conducted, and inspector training.	2022
	Collect and publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts on an annual basis.	2022
Social Programs	Make education accessible for all children, including members of the Kalinago community who may be vulnerable to child labor, by ensuring access to secondary education within the Kalinago territory.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Basic Needs Trust Fund to address child labor and make information about implementation measures publicly available on an annual basis.	2020 – 2022

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Dominican Republic

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT REGRESSION IN PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, the Dominican Republic made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Labor created the Protocol for Coordination and Internal Action to address situations of complaints or detection of child labor and its worst forms. In addition, several government agencies signed a cooperation agreement to implement a new transportation program that facilitates school access in hard-to-reach areas. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, the Dominican Republic is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because of a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Numerous reports indicate that school administrators have denied access to education to a significant number of children without identity or residency documents. Additionally, children without identity or residency documents, most of whom are of foreign origin or descent, are being prevented from receiving social services, including access to the government's poverty reduction and vocational training programs. Children in the Dominican Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including forced labor in the production of various crops. Significant enforcement gaps remain, including limited human and financial resources for labor and criminal enforcement agencies to conduct inspections, and the lack of authority for labor inspectors to directly assess penalties for labor law violations. In addition, the Dominican Republic's legal prohibitions related to trafficking are insufficient because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Dominican Republic. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	6.3 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	96.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	9.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		88.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Clearing land for sugarcane production, planting and harvesting sugarcane,† and collecting cut cane† (3-5)
	Producing coffee, rice, tomatoes, bananas, beans, garlic, and other crops (6-13)
	Picking lemons (14)
	Cattle raising (13)
Industry	Producing baked goods (7)
	Construction,† activities unknown (6,15)
Services	Street work, including vending,† shoe shining, begging, washing car windows, and transporting packages in markets (6,9,12,15,16)
	Working in convenience store deliveries (16)

Dominican Republic

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT REGRESSION IN PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Working in woodworking shops, car washes, auto repair shops, and blacksmith workshops (6,12,16)
	Scavenging in landfills (13)
	Domestic work† (6,15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, construction, street vending, begging, and agriculture, including in the production of bananas and other crops, sometimes as a result of trafficking (6,9,12,13,16,17)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,15,16,18)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9,12,15,16)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Most children working in the Dominican Republic do so in the informal sector, mainly on family farms in rural areas. (12,16) Officials from the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) observed that Constanza and the southern part of the country have the highest incidences of child labor. (16) Children in the Dominican Republic are also victims of commercial sexual exploitation, principally in tourist locations, such as coastal resorts and major urban areas. (16,19) The porous border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic has allowed Haitian children to be trafficked into the Dominican Republic, where some are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and forced to work in domestic work, street vending, begging, and forced labor in agricultural work producing bananas and other crops. (13,15,20,21) Some children also work in agricultural production, often alongside their parents, and live in communities that frequently lack basic services, including schools. (18)

Many Dominican-born persons of Haitian descent, including children, continue to remain in undocumented status because of a Constitutional Court decision in 2013 that retroactively revoked birthright citizenship of all persons born after 1929 to non-citizens in the Dominican Republic, almost all of whom were children of Haitian descent. (22,23) In general, children of undocumented parents are particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation because they may lack birth or residency documents. This increases the likelihood that these children may be denied access to education or engage in child labor, including its worst forms, in part because labor inspectors may not be able to verify their ages. (6,24,25) Despite education being free and compulsory until age 14, and the law prohibiting excluding children from school based on a lack of identity documents, numerous reports indicate that a significant number of children without identity documents were prevented from accessing education in 2022. (12,26,27) There were also reports that some schools require a list of extensive documentation in order to allow the enrollment of Haitian children. This documentation includes school transcripts or other proof of past enrollment in schools certified by several government ministries and entities, including some from the Haitian government, copies of notarized birth certificates, and official translations of required documents, if not in Spanish, which then need to be notarized by the Office of the Attorney General of the Dominican Republic. (13) As a result of these requirements, some children have been prevented from enrolling in school. There are also reports that some children of migrants, even those with legal permits to be in the country, have had difficulty accessing education, and that in some cases, the enrollment authorization process has taken up to 2 years. (13) Moreover, although the Ministry of Education's Office of Community Participation reissued a directive to public schools noting that all children must be allowed to attend school, regardless of their documentation, the Ministry of Education's current Operations Manual of Public Education Centers incorrectly requires school administrators to request children to present identity documents to enroll in school. (8,28,29) According to reports, this contradictory guidance has been used to explicitly deny migrant children and Dominican children lacking documentation access to schools. Moreover, while there is a process for caregivers to appeal cases of education denial, sources indicate that personnel responsible for managing the appeals process were not responsive. (13)

According to reports, children without identity documents are unable to continue schooling beyond the 8th grade, when they are typically 13 years of age. (13) The Ministry of Education also requires that students have a birth certificate on file in order for them to receive a high school diploma or school transcript after graduation, leaving those children without identity documents unable to prove that they have completed high school or apply for tertiary or postsecondary. (16,28,30,31) Teacher and school infrastructure shortages also create




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barriers to accessing education in the Dominican Republic. (9) In addition, a high percentage of students drop out at the primary and secondary levels. These issues particularly affect children living in rural areas and in communities predominantly of Haitian descent. (12,32) Sources indicate that some children of Haitian descent face discrimination by teachers and peers, travel long distances to schools, and are unable to afford school fees. (12,32)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Dominican Republic has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the Dominican Republic's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibitions related to child trafficking, which are insufficient because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 245–247, and 249–253 of the Labor Code; Article 40 of the Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Article 56.1 of the Constitution (26,33,34)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 1 and 2 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18; Articles 251, 720, and 721 of the Labor Code (34,35)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1–3 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18; Articles 246, 249, 252, and 253 of the Labor Code (34,35)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1, 3, and 7 of the Law Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons; Articles 25 and 409 of the Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Articles 40, 41, and 62.2 of the Constitution (26,33,36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 1, 3, and 7 of the Law Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons; Articles 25, 406, and 409–411 of the Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Article 41 of the Constitution (26,33,36)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 25 and 408–411 of the Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Articles 1, 3, and 7 of the Law Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons; Article 24 of the Law on Technological Crime; Article 56.1 of the Constitution (26,33,36,37)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 85 of the Law on Drugs and Controlled Substances (38)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes*	18	Articles 26, 96, and 97 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (39)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Articles 4, 96, 97, 231, and 232 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (39)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14‡	Article 63 of the Constitution; Articles 33, 35, 37, and 40 of the Organic Law of Education (33,40)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 63 of the Constitution; Articles 33, 35, 37, and 40 of the Organic Law of Education; Ministry of Education Circular No. 18 of 2011; Articles 45 and 46 of the Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents (26,33,40,41)

* Country has no conscription (39)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (33,40)

Prohibitions against child trafficking are insufficient because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking under the 2003 Law on Human Smuggling and Trafficking (Law 137-03); and although the Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents criminally prohibits accepting, offering, or transferring children without requiring threats, the use of force, or coercion as an element, it does not criminally prohibit the recruitment or harboring of children. (26,36)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MT)	Leads efforts to eliminate child labor, conducts labor inspections, and oversees the Directorate of Policies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor. Refers children found in exploitative conditions to social services, mainly the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI). (9)
Office of the Attorney General (AG)	Prosecutes crimes involving children, including criminal violations related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children and other worst forms of child labor. Oversees the Special Prosecutor for Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking, which receives notifications of alleged violations related to the worst forms of child labor through a hotline. (18,24,42)
National Police	Enforce criminal laws, including those prohibiting the worst forms of child labor, and coordinates with the AG in the prosecution of perpetrators, under the Ministry of Interior and Police. (43,44) Under direction of the National Police, the Tourist Police (POLITUR) detects and prevents child sex abuse and commercial sexual exploitation in tourist areas, coordinates with CONANI in the rescue of child victims, and arrests child sex offenders in tourist areas. (9,16,45)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor (MT) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of authority of labor inspectors to assess penalties.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4.4 million (16)	\$4.4 million (12)
Number of Labor Inspectors	212 (16)	208 (12)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (34)	Yes (34)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (16)	Yes (12)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	56,938 (16)	63,730 (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	45 (16)	18 (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (16)	3 (12)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (16)	3 (12)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (16)	Yes (12)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (16)	Yes (12)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (34)	Yes (34)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (16)	Yes (12)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (16)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (16)	Yes (12)

In 2022, the MT reported that there were 390 children and adolescents removed from child labor as a result of labor inspectorate operations, and that 98 of those removed received follow-up social services. (12) The MT also conducted 18 training sessions for labor inspectors, with a combined total of 624 participants. (12) Despite these efforts, research indicates that the Dominican Republic does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (9,12,16,23,46-48) The MT also reported that its budget is insufficient for office maintenance, transportation, fuel, and other resources needed to carry out adequate inspections.

In 2022, the reported 63,730 worksite inspections conducted, represented approximately 307 worksite inspections per inspector, which is a high number of inspections per inspector and likely negatively impacted inspection quality. (12) While labor inspectors are authorized to re-inspect worksites to ensure that violations are remedied, re-inspections occur less frequently and are more difficult and less consistent in remote rural areas. (23,34) In addition, Labor inspectors do not have the authority to assess labor penalties; instead, they write infraction reports that are sent to prosecutors in the Office of the Attorney General (AG) for enforcement action if prosecutors determine it is necessary. The collection of civil penalties is also the responsibility of the judicial system. (9,12) The MT reports that it only has oversight of work situations within an employer-employee relationship, leaving children engaged in work in the informal sector outside the MT's purview. In such cases, CONANI is the agency with the authority and jurisdiction to intervene, though they lack the authority to issue sanctions. (12,16)

The Labor Inspection Manual instructs inspectors to assess child labor violations by reviewing workers' identity documents and employers' records, making observations, and conducting interviews. (49) However, MT officials have expressed that improvements could be made with respect to how inspectors conduct interviews, ask follow-up questions, and use inspection data to ascertain the ages of workers and guarantee that children under age 18 are not participating in dangerous or unhealthy work. Moreover, reports indicate that in some cases, Spanish-speaking inspectors working without translation assistance have been responsible for interviewing Creole-speaking workers with limited or no Spanish-language abilities, which may have hindered those inspections. (16) Research also indicates that inspections are not always conducted in a timely manner after complaints or requests for inspections are received. In addition, evidence suggests that inspection reports often contain errors and contradictions that undermine the credibility of these reports and a lack of prosecutorial resources have hindered the ability of the AG to pursue prosecutions on criminal matters involving child labor issues. (12,23,48) Furthermore, employees and unions complained that an insufficient number of inspections were taking place, and that there was a lack of follow-through on the inspections that were carried out. An example of these allegations are reports from longtime employees in the sugar sector indicating that they have never seen or spoken to labor inspectors. (12,48)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (16)	Yes (12)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (16)	Unknown (12)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (16)	7 (12)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (16)	0 (12)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (16)	4 (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (16,43)	Yes (12)

The AG's Directorate for Children, Adolescents and Family (DINNAF) carried out several operations to rescue children and adolescents in streets and public spaces. This was done in coordination with CONANI, the MT, the National Police, and the Specialized Police for Children and Adolescents. (12) DINNAF also provided training to prosecutors on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. (12) However, reports indicate that the capacity of enforcement agencies to identify, investigate, and prosecute criminal cases related to child trafficking is limited due to a lack of human and financial resources. (24,50,51) Reports indicate there is a lack of coordination between the MT and the AG, leading to some cases referred to the AG by the MT not being subsequently investigated and prosecuted by the AG. (23,24) Moreover, research finds that CONANI does not have the financial, material, or personnel resources, facilities, and institutional capacity to meet the demand for services nationwide. (13,24,52)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor	Develops policies, approves programs, and coordinates, monitors, and evaluates efforts to address child labor in the Dominican Republic. Meets every two months, overseen by the MT, and comprises ministerial representatives, labor unions, private sector representatives, NGOs, more than 30 other institutions, and local steering committees in each province. (12,16,53) Oversees the system for referring children found during inspections to appropriate social services. (6) In 2022, President Abinader issued Decree No.431-22, which added new members to the committee and empowered it to include or exclude members and allies that the plenary considers necessary. MT also created the Protocol for Coordination and Internal Action to address situations of complaints or detection of child labor and its worst forms. (12,54,55)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of a key national policy.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Education Pact (2014–2030)	Includes strategies to address child labor and seeks to improve the quality of, and access to, primary and secondary education by increasing attendance and graduation rates and enrolling more students in the Extended School Day Program. (56) Implemented by the Ministry of Education and supported by the World Bank. (16,56) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement the Education Pact.
National Development Strategy (2010–2030)	Aims to reduce poverty and inequality, and includes programs to address child labor, provide universal education to all children, and expand access to secondary school, including for students without identity documents. (57) During the reporting period, and for the tenth consecutive year, the government committed to allocating 4 percent of the nation's GDP to primary and secondary education as indicated by the National Development Strategy. Although, reporting indicates that in 2022 they actually allocated only 3.6 percent. The purpose of this continued funding is to improve the national education system. (6,9,16,58)

In February 2022, the government launched the Intervention Model for the Protection of Children and Adolescents in Street Situations and Mobility in Public Space, which seeks to rescue children and adolescents in street situations and the worst forms of child labor. (12,59) This model began in the National District with the creation of the Operational Technical Unit (UTO), which is a multidisciplinary and inter-institutional team specially formed to support vulnerable children. During the reporting period, 254 children and adolescents participated in 71 workshops organized by the UTO. (12,59) In addition, the Cabinet of Childhood and Adolescence, the Ministry of Education, and CONANI established the Padre Luis Rosario Center in April 2022 to provide comprehensive care and social and family reintegration services, including health and education services, to children and adolescents rescued from street situations and the worst forms of child labor. (12,60) Finally, in 2022, the Specialized Prosecutor's Office against the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons (PETT) and the Puerto Plata prosecutor office signed an agreement with Puerto Plata School District I1-02 to deliver awareness-raising sessions on human trafficking in schools. (61)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
<i>SUPERATE</i> †	Main poverty eradication strategy by the government that serves as the primary line of social protection actions. Focuses on social intervention through the integration of conditional cash transfers, socio-educational support, and links with other government programs and services. (62) Components of the strategy include: educational inclusion; health, food security, and support in emergencies; economic inclusion; and housing. (62) Addresses families in vulnerable situations, particularly low-income families, with one of its goals being to increase children's school attendance and reduce child labor. (62) In 2022, the government continued carrying out cash transfers, increased social assistance, and collaborated and joined efforts with NGOs and other entities to alleviate the hunger problem in the country through this program. (63-65) Furthermore, together with the Cabinet of Childhood and Adolescence and the National Council on Disability (CONADIS), <i>SUPERATE</i> presented the National Fund for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities with the aim of raising the quality of life of this sector of the population, as well as guaranteeing access to services and support to meet their basic needs. (66) Research indicates that <i>SUPERATE</i> is not available to families without documentation, including migrants and Dominicans who lack documentation. (13)
<i>Oportunidad 14–24</i> ‡	Aims at reintegrating high-risk and socially vulnerable adolescents and young people into technical or vocational education and training programs. Provides adolescents and young people between ages 14 and 24 who have limited resources access to technical professional training, scholarships, a monthly provision of raw food, and transportation to study centers. (67-70) In 2022, the government assisted 371 youths who participated and graduated from this program; this was the first cohort to graduate from the program. The youths completed studies in the areas of beauty, hospitality, pharmacy, information technology, multimedia, secretarial work, technical support, and sales. (71,72) Research indicates that individuals without documentation, including migrants and Dominicans who lack documentation, are ineligible to participate in <i>Oportunidad 14–24</i> . (13)
Extended School Day Program (<i>Jornada Escolar Extendida</i>)†	Ministry of Education program to extend school hours to a full day (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) to improve educational achievement and reduce child labor. (73) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of the Dominican Republic.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (67,74,75)

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In 2022, the Ministry of Education appointed 24,815 teachers and directors to public education centers throughout the country to fill vacancies in the education system. (12,54) In addition, the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Land Transit and Transportation (INTRANT), and the Metropolitan Transportation Office signed an inter-institutional agreement to execute the School Transportation Program. The purpose of the program is to facilitate the mobility of students living in vulnerable areas who face difficulties in accessing the education system. The program began with a pilot in the provinces of Azua, San Cristóbal, Santo Domingo, and Monte Plata. (12,54)

Although the Dominican Republic has programs that target the worst forms of child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children and harmful work in the agricultural sector. (55) Furthermore, reports indicate that CONANI does not have specialized shelters for trafficking victims, and child victims of human trafficking who go to CONANI temporary homes until they are reunited with their families do not receive additional services. (16,55) Reports also indicate that most social programs require Dominican citizenship or documentation, and therefore Haitian children or those of Haitian descent, and even Dominican children who lack documentation, are not eligible to receive assistance from these programs. This greatly reduces the effectiveness of these programs to address child labor and its root causes. (13)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the Dominican Republic (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws prohibiting child trafficking do not require threats, the use of force, or coercion as elements of the crime.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 208 to 329 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of 4.9 million people, especially in remote rural areas.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the number of inspections conducted by each inspector is appropriate to guarantee the quality and scope of inspections.	2020 – 2022
	Improve case tracking so that labor inspectors are able to promptly follow up on violation remediation to improve enforcement of laws prohibiting child labor and discourage the use of child labor by employers.	2012 – 2022
	Establish a system to verify the age of young workers to better protect children without birth certificates or other legal documentation from exploitation.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors interview workers, in a safe environment, and that they are able to communicate with Creole-speaking workers, including those who may be underage, to adequately conduct inspections for child labor violations.	2012 – 2022
	Improve training of inspectors on child labor and child trafficking to increase the quality of interviews with employers and workers, gather consistent documentation, conduct timely re-inspections to ensure compliance, and use inspection data to enable prosecution.	2012 – 2022
	Increase human and financial resources to ensure adequate criminal and labor law enforcement related to child labor.	2009 – 2022
	Improve coordination between the Ministry of Labor and the Office of the Attorney General to ensure that violations are adequately investigated, sanctioned, and prosecuted.	2013 – 2022
	Provide legal authorization to allow labor inspectors to conduct inspections in the informal sector.	2021 – 2022
Government Policies	Take steps to implement the policies related to child labor on an annual basis and publish information about these efforts.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2021 – 2022
	Increase efforts to issue identity documents to all children to reduce their vulnerability to labor exploitation.	2011 – 2022
	Address the specific educational needs of vulnerable populations, including migrant and undocumented children.	2011 – 2022
	Increase school infrastructure and teacher availability, especially in rural areas, remove supply and school-related fees, and expand efforts to reduce discrimination on the basis of national origin in schools.	2011 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure that children are not denied access to education based on their national or ethnic origin, immigration status, or lack of identity documents and update all Ministry of Education's school manuals to align with Dominican law guaranteeing that children without birth certificates or identity documents are able to enroll in schools and receive diplomas certifying school completion.	2017 – 2022
	Expand social protection programs, particularly for child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, and agricultural labor exploitation and forced labor, and ensure that programs also provide services to vulnerable children without regular identity documents.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) has sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care for survivors of child labor and child trafficking.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that children without documentation, including Haitian children and other migrant children, are eligible to access social programs.	2022

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In 2022, Ecuador made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Interior created the National Directorate for the Investigation of Crimes Against Women, Family, Children, Adolescents, Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling, which oversees law enforcement units responsible for investigating labor and sex trafficking cases that involve children. Further, the Ministry of Tourism approved a new Code of Conduct for tourism industry workers that includes actions meant to prevent the sexual exploitation of minors in tourist establishments. In addition, the government's new social program, Inclusive Cities, brought protection services and temporary housing to 9,000 participants in 17 cities. However, children in Ecuador are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. The Ministry of Labor has reported that the resources allocated to the labor inspectorate—including the number of inspectors, transportation, and equipment—is insufficient to conduct inspections in the informal sector. The Government of Ecuador has also not undertaken a nationwide child labor survey since 2012; the lack of current information on the prevalence of child labor hampers efforts to address the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ecuador.

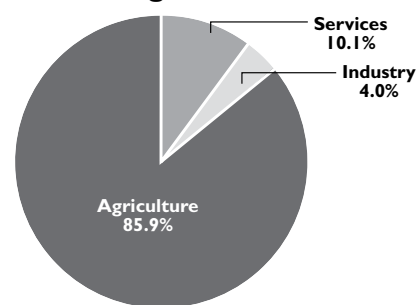
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.0 (260,567)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	7.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		97.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's Analysis of Statistics from Encuesta Nacional de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo (ENEMDU), 2021. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of bananas, rice, coffee, cocoa, palm oil, sugarcane, vegetables, citrus, and flowers (primarily for domestic consumption), including with use of chemical products† and machetes† (3-10)
	Fishing† (8,10,11)
	Hazardous work in the carving† and threading† of abacá fiber (11,12)
Industry	Gold mining† and small-scale mining† (7,10,11)
	Production of bricks† (7,10,11)
	Construction† and brickwork (3,4,10,11)
Services	Work in auto shops, including hazardous work involved in used heavy machinery (10)
	Garbage scavenging (10)
	Food services, including working as waiters and kitchen staff. (10)
	Domestic work† (8,10,11)
	Street work, including begging and vending (8,10,11,13)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (10,11,14,15)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking and robbery, sometimes as result of human trafficking (8,10,11,16)
	Recruitment of children by Colombian non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,17)
	Use in the production of pornography (10,11,14)
	Forced labor in small scale banana, hemp, and palm plantations, cacao, coffee, floriculture, mining; and in domestic work, street vending, and begging (8-11,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.







Civil society and government sources reported incidences of Peruvian adolescents being recruited under false promises of employment into forced labor in illegal mines in Ecuador, where child prostitution can also occur. (11,18-20) Migrant and refugee children from Colombia and Venezuela are vulnerable to street work, including forced begging. They are also vulnerable to exploitative labor practices in some parts of the fishing sector in the coastal region and in artisanal mining in southern Ecuador and in the northern province of Imbabura. (3,4,10,11,18,21) Some Indigenous children between the ages of 6 and 10 from the highlands are victims of human trafficking for forced begging in Guayaquil and Quito, initially under false promises of employment. (6,11,22) Some migrant and refugee children from other Latin American countries, as well as Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian girls, are used in child prostitution. (3,4,8,11,15,23) Sex trafficking networks also recruit children from schools and, increasingly, through social media platforms. (14,21) Traffickers force children into criminality, recruiting them to engage in drug trafficking and robbery. (8,11)

Despite education being free in Ecuador, children face barriers to accessing education including lack of space and teachers, economic difficulty in buying uniforms and school supplies, inadequate school infrastructure, teen pregnancy, and lack of transportation for children who must attend schools far from their homes. (3,4,10,18) In addition, some NGOs have reported students being assigned to schools that are far from their homes. (10) Reports indicate that approximately 57,000 children abandoned their studies during the reporting period due to involvement in informal employment or begging networks that prevented them from attending school. (24) Reporting also indicates that as many as 65 percent of school-age Venezuelan refugee and migrant children are not enrolled in Ecuador’s educational system due to non-institutional barriers like a lack of resources and local discrimination. (11) Undocumented students face difficulties graduating from secondary school as national authorities are unable to grant diplomas without identity documents. (10) Lastly, the government has not conducted a comprehensive nationwide child labor survey since 2012, which hampers efforts to eradicate child labor. (11-16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Ecuador has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 46 of the Constitution; Article 82 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (25,26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 87 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (26)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 5, 6, and 8 of Resolution No. 016 of 2008; Article 5 of Ministerial Accord MDT-2015-0131 (27,28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 82, 91, 105, and 213 of the Integral Penal Code (29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 47, 91, and 92 of the Integral Penal Code; Article 117 of the Organic Law on Human Mobility (29,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 91 and 100–104 of the Integral Penal Code (29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 47, 219, and 220 of the Integral Penal Code (29)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 57 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 161 of the Constitution (25,26)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 127 of the Integral Penal Code; Article 57 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 161 of the Constitution (25,26,29)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Articles 38, 42, and 43 of the Organic Intercultural Education Law (31)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 4 of the Organic Intercultural Education Law; Chapter 5, Article 28 of the Constitution (25,31)

*Country has no conscription (25)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws in the formal sector through the Directorate for the Attention to Priority Groups, which has partially resumed the responsibilities of the now-defunct "Project to Eradicate Child Labor" (PETI). (10) Monitors and identifies cases of child labor, assesses penalties, promotes public awareness campaigns to prevent child labor, provides technical assistance to local governments on child labor, and identifies victims of child labor for the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) to provide special services. (4,11) Separate from MOL, MIES conducts routine inspections in the informal sector for child labor and provides remediation services to child laborers and their families. (3,4,18) Using the Unified System of Registration of Child Labor, MOL collects information on child laborers and refers children to appropriate government services. (4,11)
Attorney General's Office (AGO)	Enforces criminal laws against child labor and hazardous child labor, including the prosecution of cases. (10,11,18) The AGO's Specialized Victim Witness Protection Program provides immediate support and shelter to survivors and witnesses willing to press charges and testify against their abusers, and coordinates referrals for further assistance with other government agencies. (18)
Ministry of Interior (MOI)	Enforces child labor laws. In 2022, through the National Police, MOI established the National Directorate for the Investigation of Crimes Against Women, Family, Children, Adolescents, Trafficking in Persons and Migrant Smuggling* with four specialized units: (1) the National Investigation Unit for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (UNIPEN); (2) the National Investigation Unit for Gender Violence, Women or Members of the Family Nucleus; (3) the National Investigation Unit for Sexual Integrity; (4) and the National Investigation Unit for Trafficking in Persons and Migrant Smuggling. All of these units are tasked with investigating crimes against children, including child labor. (10) UNIPEN is the primary anti-trafficking law enforcement unit responsible for investigating labor and sex trafficking cases involving children and is also responsible for investigating all crimes against children. (10)

* Agency responsible for child labor enforcement was created during the reporting period.

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Ecuador took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2,187,168 (11)	\$4,000,000 (10)
Number of Labor Inspectors	117 (11)	149 (10)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (32)	Yes (32)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (11)	Yes (10)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	12,335 (11)	7,782 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	5 (11)	6 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	19 (11)	4 (10)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	19 (11)	4 (10)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (10)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (11)	Yes (10)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (32)	Yes (32)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (10)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (11)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (10)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Ecuador's labor force, which includes approximately 8.3 million workers. (10,11,33,34) MOL also reported that the labor inspectorate lacked the necessary resources, such as transportation and equipment, to fulfill its mandate. (3,10) Furthermore, inspectors do not have sufficient knowledge of child labor laws and lack training on identifying victims of human trafficking. (19,21) While Ecuador's labor inspectors do carry out inspections in the informal sector, they focus primarily on formal sector employment. (11) Although Ecuadorian laws and regulations governing child labor are comprehensive, those regarding hazardous work are not enforced equally in rural areas and family-run businesses. (11) The government does not publish information from the Unified System of Registration of Child Labor, which collects data on the number of child laborers and allows labor enforcement to refer children to the appropriate government services, and research indicates the government continues to struggle with ensuring that some children rescued from working in the informal sector receive adequate social services. (19,35)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Ecuador took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of specialized shelters for boys who are survivors of sex or labor trafficking.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (11)	Yes (10)
Number of Investigations	479 (11)	414 (10)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	39 (10)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	2 (10)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (11)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (10)

A reciprocal referral mechanism exists between law enforcement and social services for victims of human trafficking; however, civil society reports that the mechanism is, at times, ad hoc. (11) Shelters serve only girls

who are survivors of sex trafficking. There are no shelters for boys who are survivors of sex trafficking, or for survivors of labor trafficking. (14) Although the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) will generally assign child victims to shelters depending on space availability, officials cite a lack of shelters in many provinces as a primary constraint in victim assistance. (3,18,21,36,37) Shelters have reported not receiving promised government funds in a timely manner and largely relied on NGOs and international funding to maintain their services. (15) Penalties were imposed for convictions related to child labor; however, the Judicial Council did not provide specific information on the penalties themselves. (10)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Directorate for the Attention to Priority Groups	MOL, through the Directorate for the Attention to Priority Groups, is the primary coordinating mechanism for the elimination of child labor. The Directorate partially assumed the roles and responsibilities of the now-defunct PETI program. (10) Aims to promote employment for parents and prevent child labor through labor inspections. (10) The Directorate was active during the reporting period, offering support for child labor eradication efforts, assessing penalties, and providing technical assistance to local governments on child labor eradication. (24)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of an active and permanent policy to address child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Prevent and Eradicate Child Labor (2021–2025)†	Promotes employment for parents and prevention of child labor through inspections. (10) Developed in March through the National Council for Intergenerational Equity's National Agenda for Intergenerational Equity, which was created as a technical planning instrument for the formulation of public policies at the national and local levels. Despite the end of the PETI program in 2021, MOL reported it continued to support child labor eradication efforts through the Directorate for the Attention to Priority Groups. (10) Reports indicate that, although this policy has been officially adopted, it has not yet been implemented. (10)
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2019–2030)	Aims to prevent, investigate, and impose legal sanctions against human trafficking with a focus on human rights, mobility, and gender, as the majority of victims in Ecuador are women. The Action Plan includes U.S.-funded support through the IOM and is the government's first multisectoral plan on human trafficking that establishes goals for every public sector institution to address human trafficking. (38-40) The government continued to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons during the reporting period. (15)
National Development Plan (<i>Plan de Creación de Oportunidades</i>) (2021–2025)	Creates employment opportunities for Ecuadorians and aims to establish a plan for future policy areas. These include economic, social, integral security, ecological transition, and institutional policy areas. (41) In the social axis listed in the plan, the Ecuadorian government lays out its objective to protect families, guarantee their rights and services, eradicate poverty, and promote social inclusion. (10) In order to meet this objective, Ecuador has set a goal of decreasing the percentage of children between the ages of 5 and 14 that engage in child labor. This plan aims to reach the goal of decreasing child labor from 6.1 percent to 4.4 percent by 2025. (9,10,41)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Tourism approved a new Code of Conduct for tourism industry workers. The Code outlines actions meant to prevent the sexual exploitation of minors in tourist establishments. (15)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the worst forms of child labor in all relevant sectors.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Inclusive Cities*†	MIES program that helps guarantee the rights of children, adolescents, people with disabilities, and the elderly population through social protection programs. Provides temporary housing for children and adolescents. (42) During the reporting period, the Inclusive Cities program reached 9,000 participants across 17 cities with populations vulnerable to child labor. (10)
National Program to Combat Street Begging and Child Labor†	MIES program that raises awareness about child begging and aims to facilitate social services for children begging in the streets. (11) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Program to Combat Street Begging and Child Labor during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Ecuador.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (18,43)

Although civil society stakeholders commended the government's social programs, they reiterated that these programs only make limited interventions in sectors in which child labor is most prevalent, specifically the informal and agricultural sectors. (18) Research found that a social registry that contains information on low-income families has not been updated since 2015, which hampers its ability to sufficiently fund social assistance programs. Civil society notes that an update to the social registry should prioritize the most vulnerable populations at risk of child labor. (4,11)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Ecuador (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen social services referral mechanisms for survivors of child labor, especially for those found in the informal sector.	2015 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 149 to 556 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 8.3 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is properly funded so that inspectors receive sufficient resources, including transportation and equipment, to carry out their duties adequately.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that inspections sufficiently cover sectors in which child labor has been reported, including the informal sector.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that laws and regulations governing child labor, especially hazardous labor, are enforced consistently throughout the country, including in rural areas and family-run businesses.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient knowledge of existing laws and receive adequate training in victim identification to conduct inspections and refer victims to social services.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal investigators receive sufficient resources, such as additional investigators, to investigate cases of suspected child labor crimes and refer victims to social services consistently.	2016 – 2022
	Provide specialized shelters for boys and girls that have been victimized by labor trafficking. Ensure that funds are distributed to shelters in a timely manner.	2018 – 2022
	Publish child labor data collected through the Unified System of Registering Child Labor.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Fully implement the National Council for Intergenerational Equity policy plan, "Prevent and Eradicate Child Labor."	2022
Social Programs	Conduct a comprehensive child labor survey to ensure sufficient and current data to inform government actions to eliminate child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure students without identity documents are able to graduate.	2022
	Develop and administer social programs to address the vulnerability of migrant and refugee children to exploitative labor practices in the fishing sector and in artisanal mining.	2018 – 2022
	Eliminate barriers to and make education accessible for all children, including Indigenous and refugee children and children from rural areas, by increasing classroom space and teachers, addressing teen pregnancy issues, providing adequate transportation, and easing the economic burden of buying school supplies.	2014 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure that all social programs that address child labor, including the National Campaign to Combat Street Begging and Child Labor, remain active and publish information on activities undertaken on an annual basis.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that social programs make interventions in sectors in which child labor is most prevalent, specifically in the informal and agricultural sectors.	2018 – 2022
	Update the social registry—which contains information on low-income families and informs the provision of social assistance—to include families most vulnerable to child labor.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Egypt made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government approved an updated National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons, which includes outcomes related to reducing child labor. The government also provided comprehensive criminal law enforcement data for inclusion in this report for the first time, and investigated 107 crimes involving 237 individuals, initiated 171 prosecutions, and achieved 70 convictions related to the worst forms of child labor. However, children in Egypt are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in quarrying limestone. The government did not publish data on its efforts to enforce its child labor laws, including labor inspectorate resources, number of child labor violations found, and penalties imposed for child labor violations. Additionally, programs to address child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem, particularly the lack of targeted programming to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and child labor in limestone quarrying.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Egypt.

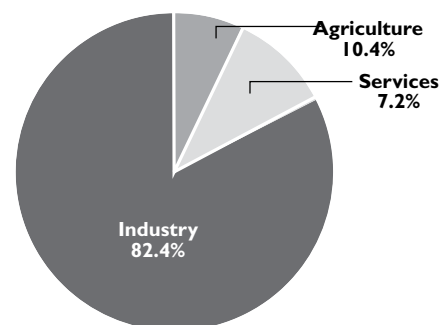
Table I. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	6 to 14	3.3 (583,290)
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	96.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	3.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		66.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2022, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2020. (2)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 6-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of cotton† (5)
	Tending livestock and poultry (6,7)
	Fishing, activities unknown (6)
Industry	Quarrying† limestone (5,7,9)
	Making bricks (3-5,9,10)
	Working in carpentry workshops (6)
	Construction, activities unknown (4,5,10)
Services	Domestic work (3-5,10,11)
	Driving tuktuks (5)
	Repairing automobiles (3-5)
	Street work, including selling goods and collecting garbage (5)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced domestic work (3,5,8,12)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3-5,12-15)
	Forced begging (3,4,12)
	Trafficking of drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,12,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In Egypt, some children are forced by their immediate and extended families into sexual exploitation, begging, domestic work, and factory labor. (12,13) In addition, some girls are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation under the pretext of temporary marriage, sometimes called "summer marriage," to wealthy foreign men, mostly from Persian Gulf countries. (3-5)







Children in Egypt face barriers to education, including access to identity documentation and the associated costs of attending school, such as school fees. Enrolling in public school requires a certified birth certificate, which some children born out of wedlock or born to parents of differing religions lack. (5) Children also drop out of school because of school-related costs, such as educational supplies, transportation, and clothing. (6) A lack of qualified teachers, poorly maintained schools, sanitation issues, classroom density, insufficient infrastructure, and bullying in schools prevent some children from attending school. (3) In rural communities, children face difficulties getting to school due to long commuting distances. In addition, girls face additional barriers to education, especially in rural Egypt, including harassment on the way to school, as well as cultural barriers. (3,8)

The government offers refugee children access to the public education system; however, refugee children are subjected to racism and bullying, and face language barriers. In response, some non-Egyptians residing in the country, such as those from Sudan, have organized independent school systems unaffiliated with the government for their children. (3,16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Egypt has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Egypt’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including incomplete hazardous work prohibitions for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 64 and 74 of the Child Law (17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 and 3 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215; Articles 1 and 3 of the Child Law (17,32)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1, 3, and Table 1 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215 (32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking (17,19,20)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 89 of the Constitution; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking (17,19,20)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 116-bis(a) of the Child Law; Article 291 of the Penal Code; Articles 2,3, 5, and 6 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking; Articles 1–4 and 6 of the Law on the Combating of Prostitution (17,20,21)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 34 of the Law on Narcotics; Article 65 of the Child Law; Article 3 of Ministry of Manpower's Decree 215 (17,22,32)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No	15	Ministry of Defense Guidelines on Youth Volunteers in the Armed Forces (23)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Military and National Service (24)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 7-bis(b) of the Child Law (17)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 59(1) of the Child Law; Articles 19, 80, and 238 of the Constitution (17,19)
Free Public Education	No		Article 54 of the Child Law (17)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (17)

The minimum age for voluntary state military recruitment does not meet international standards as it is below age 16. (23) Additionally, the law does not criminally prohibit military recruitment by non-state armed groups. (17) While public education is free by law, there are still fees for attending which, if not met, disqualify students from sitting for final exams. Not completing final exams results in a failing grade. (5,17)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Manpower	Enforces child labor laws and regulations through its inspection department, including receiving and investigating child labor complaints. Inspectors conduct labor inspections and report violations to the police, which operate under the Ministry of Interior. (5) If police investigations confirm criminal activity, cases are subsequently sent to the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO), which operates under the Ministry of Justice. (5)
Ministry of Interior	Investigates cases of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Reports violations to the Public Prosecution Office under the PGO. (3,4) Also receives reports of violations from the Administrative Control Authority, which investigates government corruption and human trafficking. (3,25)
Ministry of Justice, Prosecutor General's Office (PGO)	Prosecutes violations of laws related to the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking. (3,4)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Manpower that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (26)	No (5)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (26)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (26)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (26)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (26)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (26)	Yes (5)

The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts specific to the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this report. Although the number of labor inspectors is unknown, research indicates that Egypt does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (27)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Egypt took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including in financial resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (26)	Yes (15)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (26)	107 (15)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (26)	161 (15)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (26)	70 (15)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (26)	Yes (15)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (26)	Yes (15)

In 2022, Egyptian authorities investigated 107 crimes related to the worst forms of child labor involving 237 individuals. Crimes included commercial sexual exploitation and drug trafficking. (15)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee for the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Families	Coordinates efforts to implement the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Families. Membership includes the Ministries of Manpower, Social Solidarity, Education, Agriculture, Interior, Planning, Finance, Investment and International Cooperation, Trade, Justice, Health, Local Development, and Awqaf, in addition to the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), the National Council of Women, the Central Agency for Population and Statistics, the National Media Agency, and Al Azhar University. (3,4) In 2022, the committee met four times. (28)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established relevant policies related to child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Family (2018–2025)	Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2025 and identify roles of government agencies responsible for assisting child laborers. (3,8) Other objectives include expanding the child labor knowledge base; capacity building of agencies providing support; providing social protection, with links to existing programs; enhancing education, including vocational education for children; and advocacy and awareness raising. (10) Active in 2022. (15)
National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons (2022–2026)†	Aims to address trafficking in persons through prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnership. Includes goals such as empowering households to combat poverty and illiteracy, preventing school dropouts, and reducing child labor. (29)
National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood (2018–2030)	Includes a child labor chapter that aims to promote dialogue on child labor legislation, including updating the hazardous work list; building the capacity of relevant government agencies, such the Ministry of Manpower and NCCM; developing programs to address child labor; and expanding educational and vocational training opportunities. (3,6) Active in 2022. (14)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Solidarity and Dignity Program (<i>Takaful and Karama</i>) †	Funded by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS), this program promotes school attendance and health monitoring for children by providing income supplements to poor families. (3,6) This partnership between the government and the WFP, the UNDP, UNICEF, and the World Bank offers income supplements to poor families under the conditions that household children maintain at least an 80 percent attendance record in school and that mothers and children under age 6 provide demonstrable evidence of having been seen at health clinics four times per year. (3) In 2022, the number of families receiving assistance increased from 4.1 million to more than 5 million. (30)
Ministry of Social Solidarity Centers for Combating Child Labor†	MoSS-run centers, operated by partner NGOs, to provide services to children and their families. Consisting of 17 centers across 14 governorates. (28) In 2022, MoSS centers provided services to 600 children and their families. (28)
ACCEL Africa (2018–2023)	Aims to eliminate child labor in the cotton, textiles, and ready-made-garments sectors; implemented by the ILO and funded by the Dutch government. ACCEL Africa- Egypt partners with the Ministries of Manpower, Education, and Agriculture, as well as MoSS and NCCM, to improve policy, legal, and institutional frameworks. (31) Active in 2022. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Egypt.

Although Egypt has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly for commercial sexual exploitation and quarrying limestone.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Egypt (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law establishes age 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that there are criminal penalties for recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.	2022
	Ensure that the law prohibits school fees for the first nine years of education.	2022
Enforcement	Publish information on civil child labor law enforcement, including labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, training for labor inspectors, number of labor inspections conducted, number of child labor violations found, number of penalties imposed for child labor violations, number of penalties that were collected, whether routine inspections were conducted and whether they were targeted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2011 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for violations of child labor laws that are not considered criminal.	2017 – 2022
	Employ at least 1,897 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 28.5 million people.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure universal access to free public education, especially for girls and refugee children, by addressing the cost of school fees, supplies, violence in schools, lack of documentation, and other barriers to education.	2010 – 2022
	Expand programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, particularly targeted programming to prevent and address child commercial sexual exploitation and limestone quarrying.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, El Salvador made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government amended the Labor Code to allow for higher fines to be imposed for child labor violations. The Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Attorney General's Office added 6 prosecutors for a total of 15. In addition, the National Council on the Trafficking of Persons carried out trainings for hospitality and emergency services hotline workers to enable them to better identify victims of human trafficking. However, children in El Salvador are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and in illicit activities, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the harvesting of coffee. Law enforcement agencies throughout the country continue to lack sufficient resources to enforce child labor laws. Gaps also remain related to the lack of publicly available, comprehensive information on the government's labor and criminal law enforcement efforts. Finally, social programs do not adequately address the full scope of the child labor problem in the country, particularly in the service sector.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the Director General of Statistics and Census published results from the 2021 El Salvador Annual Multipurpose Household Survey, which found that around 81,164 children between the ages of 5 and 17 are working in El Salvador, an 8 percent decrease since 2020. (1,2) The survey also found that more than 61 percent of child laborers live in rural communities and 41 percent do not attend school. However, it did not include information about the sectors in which children are working. (1) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in El Salvador.

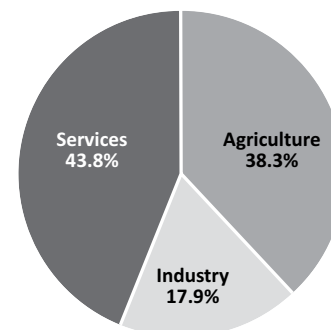
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.1 (41,069)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	91.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		100.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2014, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EHPM), 2020. (4)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting sugarcane† and coffee,† and production of cereal grains (5-7)
	Cattle-raising† (6,7)
	Fishing,† including harvesting shellfish and mollusks† (5,7-11)
Industry	Manufacturing fireworks† (5,7,11)
	Production of baked goods (6,7)
	Construction† (8,9)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Garbage scavenging,† street begging,† washing cars, and vending† (5,9,12,13)
	Domestic work (5,8,12)
	Street vending (8,9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,9-12)
	Use by gangs to perform illicit activities, including committing homicides, delivering threats, collecting extortion money, conducting surveillance activities, and trafficking drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,9,12)
	Forced begging, domestic work, agricultural labor, construction, and work in textiles (5,9,10,12,14)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Multiple reports, including by third-party monitoring groups, indicate that the use of child labor in sugarcane harvesting has decreased. (15) However, despite ongoing government efforts to address child labor in this sector, recent data have not been published to provide details on government programs that focus on addressing the problem and demonstrate the impact of such efforts. (7) Children in El Salvador often lack economic stability and educational opportunities and are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and recruitment by gangs to carry out illicit activities. (8,9,12) Gangs have traditionally forced young girls into domestic servitude, including providing childcare, and in some cases, children are taken into prisons to be commercially sexually exploited by prisoners. (8,9) According to El Salvador's Trafficking in Person's Special Prosecutor and local NGOs, adolescent girls with limited education are among the most at risk of being trafficked. (16) LGBTQI+ adolescents have also been forced into commercial sexual exploitation by gangs. (5) However, in 2022, gang activity decreased dramatically across El Salvador following the arrests of thousands of suspected gang members under the government's state of exception, introduced March 27, 2022. Reports have documented gangs' loss of control over neighborhoods throughout the country, and residents of these neighborhoods had observed a significant decline in extortion, violence, and gang recruitment by the end of 2022. (2,17) Some of the suspected gang members arrested were children and adolescents. The Government of El Salvador did not implement screening measures for indicators of force, fraud, or coercion in this population. (2)




Children in El Salvador face numerous barriers to education, such as insufficient funds allocated to education and precarious school infrastructure. (18) Most schools in the country are not constructed in a manner that allows them to adjust to environmental changes. For example, 6 out of 10 schools are not prepared to face environmental risks, natural disasters, and epidemics. (9) Furthermore, 1,943 of the country's approximately 6,400 schools do not have adequate sanitation systems, 938 schools do not have access to drinking water, and an additional 964 schools have an inconsistent source of water. (9) Reporting also indicates that children from indigenous communities disproportionately lack access to education. (5,10,15) Many students drop out of school before completing their education, particularly during middle school, due to the existing barriers to education. (9) Some transgender children have been denied access to education, and 23 percent of LGBTQI+ youth stopped their education before high school, in contrast with the 7.1 percent children nationwide who drop out of basic education. (8) Furthermore, gang violence has led to forced displacement of families, resulting in additional children dropping out of school. (10) The Ministry of Education (MINED) reported that only 6 out of 10 students complete 9 years of compulsory education. (9) Children who do not attend school are more vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (15,19)

According to the Comprehensive Law of Protection of Childhood and Adolescence, a lack of identity documents should not prevent school enrollment. However, research indicates that children are, in practice, being required to have birth certificates to enroll in schools, in contravention of national law. (5,8,10) According to MINED, it is standard procedure in every school in the country to require birth certificates for enrollment. In the cases when a child does not have a birth certificate, the school will consider their enrollment, but there is no guarantee of admission. (20) This practice may be having an adverse effect on the enrollment rates of children in school, because the cost for identity documents is prohibitive for very poor families. (5,8-10)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

El Salvador has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in El Salvador's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 114, 116, and 627 of the Labor Code; Article 38.10 of the Constitution; Articles 59 and 60 of the Law for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (LEPINA) (21-23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 105 and 627 of the Labor Code; Article 38 of the Constitution; Article 2 of Agreement 241 of 2011 (21,22,24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of Agreement 241 of 2011 (24)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 54, and 55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Article 13 of the Labor Code; Article 56 of LEPINA; Articles 4 and 9 of the Constitution (21-23,25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 54, and 55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Article 56 of LEPINA (23,25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 54, and 55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 169–173 of the Penal Code; Article 55 of LEPINA (23,25,26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 54, and 55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 214 and 345 of the Penal Code; Article 56 of LEPINA (23,25,26)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Articles 2 and 6 of the Military Service Law (27)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 215 of the Constitution; Articles 2 and 11 of the Decree No. 298 (21,28)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 345 of the Penal Code; Article 1 of the Law Prohibiting Gangs and Criminal Organizations; Article 7 of the Constitution (21,26,29)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16‡	Articles 5, 18, 20, and 22 of the General Education Law; Article 82 of LEPINA (21,23,30)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 5, 18, 20, and 22 of the General Education Law; Article 82 of LEPINA; Article 56 of the Constitution (21,23,30)

* Country has no conscription

‡ Age calculated based on available information (23,30)

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In 2022, the Legislative Assembly passed reforms to Article 627 of the Labor Code, which allow for higher fines to be imposed for child labor violations. (31) The Growing Together Law, which entered into force on January 1, 2023, replaced the Comprehensive Law of Protection of Childhood and Adolescence (LEPINA). This law merged El Salvador's two child protection agencies, Consejo Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia (CONNA) and the Instituto Salvadoreño para la Niñez y la Adolescencia (ISNA) into one: El Consejo Nacional de la Primera Infancia, Niñez y Adolescencia (CONAPINA). (8,32) Under LEPINA, which made secondary education compulsory, the minimum age for work was lower than the compulsory education age. As Growing Together repeals LEPINA, it appears that the compulsory education levels are early childhood education and basic education, making the new compulsory education age 16. However, under both LEPINA and Growing Together, El Salvador's light work framework is inconsistent with international standards because it does not specify the work activities children can perform. (21-23)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS)	Inspects worksites for labor violations, including child labor, and monitors working conditions for adolescents who are granted work authorization. (5,11) Maintains a child labor unit dedicated to child labor law enforcement issues. (13,33) Refers cases of the worst forms of child labor to the Attorney General's Office. (5,13)
Ministry of Justice and Public Security	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, together with the Attorney General's Office, through the National Civil Police (PNC), which maintains a special trafficking in persons unit to investigate and prosecute human trafficking, including child trafficking. (5,9,11,25)
Attorney General's Office	Responsible for initiating criminal proceedings for all types of the worst forms of child labor, as well as bringing the cases to trial. The Attorney General is the head of the office and is elected by the Legislative Assembly. (9) In 2022, the Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Attorney General's Office gained 6 additional prosecutors, for a total of 15 prosecutors. (8)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in El Salvador took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1.6 million (9)	\$1.68 million (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (9)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (9)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (8)

Since 2020, the government has provided limited information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. MTPS has indicated that its budget is insufficient to address workers' rights. (10) In addition, inspectors focus primarily on the formal sector in urban areas, as resource constraints prevent inspections in El Salvador's large informal sector. (5,8,10,15,34) While the number of labor inspectors in the country is unknown, research indicates that El Salvador does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (8,35,36)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in El Salvador took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	Unknown (9)	36 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown (9)	3 (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (8)

The government provided limited information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (2) The scope of the government's criminal law enforcement efforts, however, is likely insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem in the country, particularly when it comes to the worst forms of child labor. The Attorney General's Office stated the need for more investigators and analysts due to the complexity of the investigations and the specialized investigation techniques required. (9,10) Reports also indicate that the Ministry of Justice and Public Security is underfunded and is unable to support a sufficient number of investigators to collect and analyze evidence to process case backlogs. (13,15,16,34) Interagency coordination remained weak during the reporting period. (38)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor	Determines and implements government efforts to address child labor. Chaired by MTPS, includes 11 government agencies, along with representatives from labor unions, business associations, and NGOs. (11,39) Research was unable to determine whether the National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor was active during the reporting period.

The National Council on the Trafficking of Persons met several times in 2022 at the working level. It carried out training and awareness campaigns to help workers in the hospitality sector and operators of emergency services hotlines recognize possible trafficking victims. (8,40)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of mainstreaming of child labor issues into relevant national policies.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents in El Salvador (PNPNA) (2013–2023)	Seeks to protect children from violence and harm, including the worst forms of child labor. Other objectives include reducing poverty and improving health services and access to quality education for children, including children with disabilities. (41) The National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONNA) reported that in 2022 it implemented several specialized plans under the National Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents, including Open Arms, which provided returning migrant children and their families with guaranteed support services to help prevent child labor. (2)
National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons	Provides a comprehensive plan to address human trafficking of adults and children for labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Aims to improve prevention efforts, victim assistance, prosecution of trafficking crimes, interagency coordination, training, and anti-corruption efforts. (42,43) During the reporting period, the government deployed an immediate response team to identify possible survivors of human trafficking returning to El Salvador. (8) The government also developed training plans for the PNC on issues pertaining to trafficking in persons. (40,44)
National Policy to Support Early Childhood Development (<i>Crecer Juntos</i>) (2020–2030)	Seeks to ensure children reach their maximum potential during early childhood by guaranteeing the necessary conditions to provide them with education, health, nutrition, and environments that protect their rights. Also aims to eradicate child labor for children between the ages of 5 and 7 by 2030. (13,45) During the reporting period, the government created a management team in each of the 14 departments to implement the plan and conducted a training course for those teams. The government also formed an interagency team to monitor the <i>Crecer Juntos</i> policy. (2)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (9,15,46,47)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Public Awareness Campaigns for At-Risk Populations†	Government public awareness campaigns implemented by CONNA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to raise awareness about the dangers of human trafficking. Includes the “Protection Starts at Home” awareness program and the “Call 1 2 3” Hotline, both of which promote respect toward the physical, psychological, and sexual integrity of children and adolescents. (48) The hotline offers children and adults the ability to consult specialists in emergency situations. (48) In 2022, CONNA strengthened the services of its hotline, running a social media campaign to promote the hotline and CONNA’s services. The hotline received calls regarding 26 cases of child labor during the reporting period. (8)
Sustainable Families Programs†	Focused on improving health, education, productivity, and security, and eliminating poverty through inclusive and sustainable economic growth and access to public services. Includes Health and Education Bonus Programs that assist families with cash transfers conditioned on children’s school attendance and health checkups. (13,42) This program continued during the reporting period, with over 29,000 families receiving health or education bonuses in 2022. (8)
School Prevention and Security Plan†	Programs implemented by the Ministry of Education and Public Security and the PNC in schools with high levels of violence. Includes activities such as provision of psychological help, online classes, skills workshops for youth, and increased police patrols. (13,49,50) During the reporting period, the PNC, with the support of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, developed training sessions for children and adolescents designed to remove children from risky situations, such as affiliation with gang members and drug trafficking. The program reached 233 schools and benefitted 11,065 children. (8)

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of El Salvador.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (15)

Despite efforts to address human trafficking, services for boys and LGBTQI+ youth who are human trafficking survivors are limited, which may leave them vulnerable to being trafficked again. (38,40) Although the government implements several programs to reduce the worst forms of child labor by assisting poor families and school children, research found no evidence that the government has programs that assist child laborers who may not be living with their families or attending school, such as children engaged in domestic work. (13)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in El Salvador (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the legal light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be undertaken by those under age 16.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Provide sufficient funding and resources to the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and criminal law enforcement agencies to fully enforce child labor laws and investigate cases involving the worst forms of child labor, including in the informal sector.	2010 – 2022
	Employ at least 193 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of approximately 2.9 million people.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that all labor inspectors receive training on child labor themes.	2018 – 2022
	Collect and publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of labor inspectors and whether they received training on child labor, the number and type of labor inspections conducted, the number of violations found, and the total penalties imposed and collected.	2021 – 2022
	Collect and make publicly available complete information on training for new criminal investigators and data on the number of prosecutions initiated and number of sentences imposed for the commission of child labor crimes.	2019 – 2022
	Improve coordination between the National Civil Police and the Office of the Attorney General in their investigation and prosecution of criminal cases related to the worst forms of child labor, including by developing electronic information-sharing capabilities.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure there is a sufficient number of criminal law enforcement officials to carry out criminal investigations on the worst forms of child labor, and that they receive specialized training.	2021 – 2022
	Screen for indicators of the worst forms of child labor among children apprehended for illicit activity in connection to organized criminal groups and ensure that they are provided with adequate social services.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that all bodies responsible for coordinating government activities to address child labor, including the National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor, are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish government statistics evaluating the impact of collaborative projects targeting child labor in sugarcane production.	2016 – 2022
	Remove barriers to education, such as birth registration requirements, and ensure access for all children, including students of indigenous descent and LGBTQI+ youth.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that schools have proper infrastructure and sanitation systems to support students.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that adequate services are available for all human trafficking survivors, including boys and LGBTQI+ youth.	2020 – 2022
	Implement programs to support child laborers who may not be living with their parents, including child domestic workers.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure annual surveys that provide data on child labor include information on specific child labor work sectors and the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Eritrea is receiving an assessment of no advancement. Despite initiatives to address child labor, Eritrea is assessed as having made no advancement because it demonstrated complicity in the use of forced child labor. Government officials continued to force students in grade 12, some of whom are under the age of 18, to participate in military training elements of the government's compulsory national service program. Otherwise, the government made efforts by increasing the number of its child wellbeing committees from 43 in 2021 to 67 in 2022. Children in Eritrea are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced military training associated with national service, forced agricultural labor, and forced recruitment by state armed groups for use in armed conflict. In addition, Eritrea's minimum age protections do not apply to children working outside formal employment relationships, and laws do not criminally prohibit the use of a child for prostitution; the use, procuring, or offering of a child in illicit activities; or the procuring or offering of a child for pornography or pornographic performances. Moreover, the government does not publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Eritrea. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		55.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3,4)
	Herding livestock (3-5)
Industry	Small-scale manufacturing, including recycling, remanufacturing, and repurposing metal (4,6)
Services	Domestic work, including fetching water and firewood (3,6)
	Working in auto mechanic shops, bicycle repair shops, tea and coffee shops, metal workshops, grocery stores, the Asmara bowling alley, and open markets (6-9)
	Street work, including vending, cleaning cars, and begging (3,4,6,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Compulsory participation in national service or military training associated with national service prior to age 18, and in forced agricultural and domestic work (4,10-12)
	Forced recruitment of children by state armed groups for use in armed conflict (13,14)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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In order to graduate from high school and meet the compulsory training component of national service prescribed by the Proclamation on National Service No. 82/1995, students are required to complete their final year of schooling (grade 12) at the Warsay Yikealo Secondary School located at the Sawa military complex. Each year, 11,000 to 15,000 students enter grade 12 at Sawa, and while many of these students have typically reached age 18 by the time they participate in the military training component of 12th grade schooling, some are reportedly as young as age 16. (4,10,15,16) During the year at Sawa, 4 months are devoted to mandatory military training, which includes military discipline and procedures, weapons training, a survival exercise, and a 2- to 4- week war simulation, and some conscripts are forced to perform agricultural labor on government-owned farms. (11,15,17) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education reinstated a compulsory summer campaign program in which high school students implement “greening” programs for little to no pay, and failure to comply could result in students being fined or being unable to enroll in school the following term. (18)

Without completion of (and official release from) national service assignments, Eritrean children face a future of indefinite national service. They endure notoriously harsh conditions and corruption at Sawa, including allegations of military commanders offering food and better treatment to female students in exchange for sexual acts. (12,19) These factors underlie an ongoing exodus of unaccompanied minors from the country. (3,20,21) Adolescent children, some as young as age 14, who attempted to leave Eritrea were sometimes detained or forced to undergo military training, despite being younger than the minimum age of 18 for compulsory military recruitment. (3,20,22,23) In addition, the military periodically conducts roundups, known as *giffas*, to perform identity checks. There have been reports that *giffas* have resulted in the imprisonment of children alleged to be attempting to evade compulsory national service and recruitment into the military. (10,20,24)

The UN Special Rapporteur’s report on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, covering the period from April 2021 to April 2022, collected witness accounts of children as young as 14 years old rounded up off the streets for military conscription. (13,14) The UN Special Rapporteur also received information on the deployment of Eritrean children in military combat in Tigray. Most of the children deployed were 16 and 17 years old. (14,18) A large number of children were allegedly injured or killed during the early stages of the conflict, and dozens sustained grave injuries causing disabilities. (14,18)




Eritrea is particularly vulnerable to climate change, especially flooding and drought, which may make children more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the Southern Red Sea region was dealing with the effects of drought, including dead livestock, failed crops, and high malnutrition rates. (18) Children, particularly in rural areas, also face numerous barriers to education access, which may increase their vulnerability to child labor, including a lack of access to teachers, lack of personnel due to teachers fleeing the country to avoid open-ended conscription into the national service, and a limited number of classrooms, as well as a lack of transportation, uniforms, and school supplies. (4,20,25) To the address the shortfall, the government recently deployed teachers to less-populated regions to educate rural and nomadic children. (4,7) The government’s national development agenda also prioritizes the expansion of schooling in rural areas. (4,26,27)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Eritrea has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Eritrea's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including minimum age protections that do not apply to all children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Articles 3 and 68 of the Labor Proclamation (28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		Articles 3, 35, and 69 of the Labor Proclamation (28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 69 of the Labor Proclamation (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 3 and 9 of the Labor Proclamation; Articles 565 and 570 of the Penal Code of 1957 (28,29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 94, 565, 604-607 of the 1957 Penal Code (29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 604-607, 609, 610, 776 of the Penal Code of 1957 (29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 6 and 8 of the Proclamation on National Service (10)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No	14‡	
Free Public Education	No		Article 21 of the Constitution (30)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (22,23,26)

In 2015, Eritrea passed into law a new Penal Code that expanded legal protections against human trafficking, forced labor, and the sexual exploitation of children. However, because the 2015 Penal Code was never published in the Gazette of Eritrean Laws, as required under Article 3, the law has not officially taken effect. (12,21,31) The Labor Proclamation's minimum age protections do not apply to children working outside formal employment relationships, such as those who are self-employed, which does not conform to international standards requiring all children to be protected by the minimum age to work. (28) In addition, Article 69 of the Labor Proclamation authorizes the Minister of Labor to issue a list of activities prohibited to children under age 18; however, the government has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (32) Likewise, the Labor Proclamation's hazardous work protections do not apply to children working outside formal employment relationships. (28)

Laws governing the use of children in illicit activities are not sufficient because the Penal Code does not criminally prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of a child for the production and trafficking of drugs. (29) Laws

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regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children are also insufficient because the use of a child for prostitution is not criminally prohibited, nor is procuring or offering a child for pornography or for pornographic performances. (29) While the Proclamation on National Service No. 82/1995 requires compulsory national service from all citizens ages 18 to 40, the law is silent on voluntary military service, and thus places no explicit limitations on the voluntary recruitment of children under 18 into the national armed forces. (10)

Eritrea does not appear to have any laws guaranteeing free basic education or setting the compulsory education age, increasing the risk of children’s involvement in child labor. However, several government policies provide free and compulsory basic education to all children below the age of 14, including the Education Sector Development Plan, the Nomadic Education Policy, and the Comprehensive National Child Policy. (26,32-34)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MoLSW)	Enforces labor laws and investigates labor abuses, including child labor, through its Labor Inspection Division. (13,16)
Eritrean Police	Enforce laws and investigate referred cases of child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and the use of children in illicit activities. (6,13)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Eritrea took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MoLSW) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of labor law enforcement data.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	28 (35)	55 (36)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (35)	Yes (4,36)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)

Inspectors, in collaboration with the local administrations and police, are empowered to identify and prosecute child labor violations. Penalties for labor violations are assessed in coordination with inspectors, administrators, and the police, and are adjudicated by judicial authorities. (7)

Labor inspectors are not provided sufficient resources, including transportation, to conduct investigations of sites where child labor is likely to occur. (4) Moreover, the government did not provide information on its labor inspectorate efforts for inclusion in this report, nor did the government provide information on actions taken by enforcement agencies to address child labor. (12,13)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Eritrea took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of criminal law enforcement data.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (35)	Unknown (4)

Despite evidence that children younger than age 18 are forced to participate in military training, research did not identify measures taken by the government in 2022 to ensure that children were not subjected to compulsory military training. (4,6,11,28)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a coordination mechanism to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interagency Steering Committee on Trafficking and Migration	Aims to prevent and address human trafficking among vulnerable groups, including children. Includes representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MoLSW, the national police, the Immigration and Nationality Department, the National Union of Eritrean Women, and the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students. (18) The government did not report any action taken by the steering committee during the reporting period. (18)

Eritrea has 67 child wellbeing committees, 19 of which were established in 2022, that operate at the local level and coordinate representatives from the political, health, educational, legal, and civil society sectors. They are charged with ensuring that children in distress receive specialized care. (4,7) The committee mandates are primarily focused on reducing female genital mutilation and child marriage, and are not directly related to addressing child labor. (4,6) Although Eritrea has a coordinating mechanism to address human trafficking, it does not have a coordinating mechanism to address other forms of child labor. (13)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 8). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in carrying out policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Comprehensive National Child Policy	Addresses underlying causes of child labor through studies of and assessments on the nature and conditions of child labor, designs advocacy and public awareness campaigns on the worst forms of child labor, and empowers communities and the public sector to monitor and prevent child labor from occurring. (33,37) The policy calls for the provision of free and compulsory basic education to all children, irrespective of gender, sex, ethnicity, religion, or disability. (38) The policy outlines the creation of a National Action Plan for the elimination of child labor, but this plan has not been drafted, leaving children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Although reports suggest that components of the policy are being implemented, research was unable to identify activities undertaken to implement the policy during the reporting period. (12,33)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Complementary Elementary Education†	Program created by the government in partnership with UNICEF in 2007 that addresses the educational needs of out-of-school children ages 9 to 14 in remote and rural areas. Condenses 5 years of elementary education into a 3-year program to allow students to either mainstream into formal education at the secondary level or access vocational education. (3,17,39) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Education established 11 complementary elementary education centers with essential teaching and learning materials. (40)
Better Migration Management	EU-led program encompassing 11 countries in North, Central, and East Africa; aims to address the international labor market, including trafficking of children. The Government of Eritrea joined the program on May 28, 2019. (6,41) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the policy during the reporting period.
Education Sector Development Plan (2018–2022)	Established 8 years of free and compulsory education for all children. (39,42) Included a strategy to ensure equitable access to education for all children, including in nomadic communities, through the provision of portable classrooms. (37,39) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Eritrea.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (40,43)

During the reporting period, the MoLSW supported more than 5,000 children to enroll and resume their education in an effort to prevent children from engaging in child labor. The MoLSW provided children with education materials and cash to cover their school uniforms, registration fees, and books. (4) Despite this effort, research found no evidence of programs to assist children working in agriculture, domestic work, and street work, or that address all worst forms of child labor in the country.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Eritrea (Table 10).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Publish the Penal Code of 2015 in the Gazette of Eritrean Laws and ensure its full implementation.	2022
	Ensure that minimum age protections extend to all children working outside of formal employment relationships, including those who are self-employed.	2010 – 2022
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children and ensure that all children are protected by hazardous work prohibitions, including children in the informal sector and those working outside of formal employment relationships.	2015 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of a child for illicit activities.	2013 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the use of a child for prostitution and procuring and offering of a child for pornography and pornographic performances.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes age 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.	2022
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.	2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish by law an age up to which education is compulsory that extends to 14 years, the minimum age for employment.	2016 – 2022
	Cease the practice of imprisoning children discovered evading compulsory national service during military-led <i>giffas</i> .	2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish information on labor inspectorate funding; total number of inspections conducted at worksites; number of violations found; number of violations for which penalties were imposed and collected; number of targeted, routine, and unannounced inspections conducted; and whether complaint mechanisms and referral mechanisms are in place.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors are provided with sufficient resources, including transportation, to access sites where child labor is likely to occur.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including initial and refresher training for new investigators; the number of criminal investigations, violations, prosecutions, and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor; the number of penalties imposed; and whether a reciprocal referral mechanism exists.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that there are reciprocal referral mechanisms between labor authorities and social services.	2021 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken by agencies responsible for child labor law enforcement to address child labor on an annual basis, including activities by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, and the Eritrean Police.	2022
Coordination	Publish information on the Interagency Steering Committee on Trafficking and Migration's efforts to coordinate government activities to address human trafficking on an annual basis.	2022
	Establish a key coordinating mechanism to address all worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
Government Policies	Take actions to ensure that children under age 18 are not placed in military training or agricultural labor assignments as part of national service.	2009 – 2022
	Cease government programs that force high school children to engage in agricultural labor and other public works as a requirement to enroll in school.	2022
	Publish information on actions taken to implement government policies relevant to child labor, including the Comprehensive National Child Policy.	2021 – 2022
	Enact policies to address all forms of child labor using the framework outlined in the Comprehensive National Child Policy, including child labor in agriculture, manufacturing, the services industry, and in armed groups.	2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in all sectors in which it is known to occur, including farming, to inform policies and programs.	2009 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to make education accessible for all children, including children in rural areas, by building schools, removing financial barriers to attendance, and improving safety to ensure the retention of qualified teachers and students.	2010 – 2022
	Publish information on actions taken to implement the Better Migration Management program on an annual basis.	2019 – 2022
	Institute programs and publish information regarding efforts to address child labor, including in agriculture, domestic work, street work, and the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Eswatini made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security began conducting a review of their offices with the International Labor Organization to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts in addressing child labor. However, children in Eswatini are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work, forced livestock herding, and commercial sexual exploitation. Significant gaps in the legal framework remain, including a lack of legislation regulating the labor conditions under *Kuhlehla* and other customary practices. In addition, the *de facto* compulsory education age does not meet international standards.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Eswatini.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	11.7 (35,368)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	13.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		88.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 4), 2010. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Raising and herding livestock, including cattle, buffalo, goats, swine, horses, and sheep (3-6)
Services	Domestic work (6)
	Street work, including working as vendors, bus attendants, taxi conductors, porters, and car washers (5,7-9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in livestock herding, domestic work, farming, and market vending (7-11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,7-13)
	Use in illicit activities, including growing drugs such as marijuana (11)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children perform physically arduous tasks while herding in the grasslands and mountainous regions, and risk occupational injury and disease from exposure to dangerous tools and chemicals. Children's injuries sustained during livestock herding include open wounds, fractures, dislocations and sprains, fever, extreme fatigue, and snake bites. (4) In addition, there is evidence that children are involved in the production—but not the dealing or trafficking—of marijuana, which remains illegal. (3) Research suggests that in recent years, children from neighboring countries have been trafficked through Eswatini for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. There are also reports that children from Eswatini, particularly orphaned and vulnerable girls from poor families, have been lured into sexual exploitation through promises of employment in neighboring countries, particularly South Africa. (3)

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The government provides free primary education from grade one through grade seven and subsidizes secondary education for the approximately 70 percent of Eswatini's children who are orphaned or vulnerable. At the lower secondary and upper secondary levels, however, the cost of school fees is a barrier for students whose families lacked sufficient funds to sustain their enrollment. (3,5,14) In addition, there is a shortage of teachers in numerous areas throughout the country. (6)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Eswatini has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Eswatini's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including deficiencies with the country's compulsory age provisions as they are below the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 2, 234, and 238 of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act; Section 2, 97, 98, 109 of the Employment Act (15,16)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 236 and 238 of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act; Article 29 of the Constitution (15,17)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2, 97, 98, and 109 of the Employment Act; Articles 2, 233, and 236-238 of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2, 13, 232, and 238 of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act; Sections 144 and 145 of the Employment Act; Articles 2, 12, and 13 of the People Trafficking and People Smuggling (Prohibition) Act; Article 17 of the Constitution (15-18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 75, and 76 of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act; Articles 2, 3, 12, and 13 of the People Trafficking and People Smuggling (Prohibition) Act (15,18)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 42-46 of the Crimes Act; Sections 2, 13-15, 24, 25, and 38 of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act; Articles 2, 12, and 13 of the People Trafficking and People Smuggling (Prohibition) Act (18-20)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 16 and 49 of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (15)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Sections 5 and 17 of The Umbutfo Swaziland Defense Force Order (21)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Sections 5 and 17 of The Umbutfo Swaziland Defense Force Order (21)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No	12/13‡	Sections 10 of the Free Primary Education Act (22)
Free Public Education	No		Section 3, 6, 7, and 10 of the Free Primary Education Act (22)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (22)

Section 10 of the Free Primary Education Act requires parents to send their children to school for the completion of primary education, which is typically around ages 12 or 13. As a result, children who complete primary education between ages 12 to 14 are vulnerable to child labor, as they are not required to be in school but also cannot legally work because they are under age 15, the minimum age for work. (22,23) In addition, the Free Primary Education Act provides for free schooling for citizens for seven years, although basic education is a total of nine years and includes lower secondary education. The failure to provide free basic education for the full nine years may increase the risk of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor. (22)

While there is some identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children based on the current legislation, the list is not comprehensive to all hazardous jobs in Eswatini. The Employment Law does not cover herding, for which there is evidence of exposure to dangerous substances and temperatures. (4,6,16)

Previous reports indicated that local chiefs required residents, including children, to participate in non-communal tasks such as seasonal weeding. This work was performed through the customary practice of *Kuhlehla*, a practice in which people render services to the local chief or king. (14,24) The ILO has requested that the government issue legislation to regulate the nature and conditions of *Kuhlehla* and ensure that the law explicitly states the voluntary nature of participation in such work. (24)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security	Enforces child labor laws and promotes relations between labor, government, and business through tripartite dialogue. (14) During the reporting period, began conducting a review of their offices with the ILO to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts in addressing child labor. (6)
Royal Eswatini Police Services	Investigate cases involving the worst forms of child labor. Inform victims of sexual offenses, including commercial sexual exploitation, of available counseling and other support services. (20,25) During the reporting period, police forces received training on how to properly respond to suspected victims of human trafficking. (26)
Director of Public Prosecutions	Prosecutes cases involving the worst forms of child labor and refers child survivors to social and legal support services. (3,20) Responsible for implementing survivor identification guidelines and referral mechanisms for victims of human trafficking and those at risk. (3,20)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Eswatini took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including financial and human resource allocation.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	14 (3)	18 (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (16)	Yes (16)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (3)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (16)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (6)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Eswatini's work force, which includes approximately 396,000 workers. (3)

In previous years, research indicated that labor inspectors lacked sufficient resources, such as vehicles, to conduct inspections. (3,5,6,12,25)

While a mechanism to assess civil penalties exists, inspectors are not allowed to assess penalties. They must refer the matter to the police, who in turn refer to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for framing formal charges against a company or individual. (3) If the case is prosecuted and concluded against the employer, then the courts will determine the fines. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Eswatini took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (3)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	0 (3)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	N/A (3)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	0 (3)	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (3)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (6)

The Royal Eswatini Police Services lacked sufficient resources to carry out investigations related to the worst forms of child labor and likely will continue to lack sufficient resources due to the ongoing economic crisis and budget cuts in Eswatini. (3,5,14)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Labor Task Force	A multi-sectoral team comprising different ministries along with private members and NGOs. The task force is responsible for overseeing the Action Program for Combating Child Labor in Eswatini and takes the lead on child labor issues throughout the country. (6,28) Research was unable to determine whether this group took actions during the reporting period to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

The Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force formulates policies and programs to prevent and suppress human trafficking and people smuggling, including programs to provide assistance to survivors and increase the public's awareness of the causes and consequences of human trafficking and smuggling. The task force also exchanges information on cases of human trafficking among relevant stakeholders, including the police, immigration officers, social workers, and prosecutors. (18) Although the government has coordinating mechanisms that address child labor and human trafficking, resource constraints, poor communication, and a lack of coordination between agencies has resulted in confusion about its mandate, how to accomplish their mission, and the overall effectiveness of the task force. (6,12)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Strategic Framework and Action Plan to Combat People Trafficking (2019–2023)	Assigns responsibilities for addressing human trafficking to relevant government agencies and provides services to survivors. (29) Aims to improve protection for survivors, increase prosecution for offenders, and support continued prevention efforts. (29) Research was unable to determine whether actions were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
Action Program on Combating Child Labor in Eswatini (2021–2026)	Outlines key strategies that the government should use to prevent children from engaging in child labor and for withdrawing those already in child labor situations. (6,28) The task force responsible for this policy continued to meet during the reporting period. (6)
National Children's Policy	Represents the policy framework of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act and aims to promote the rights of children, protect children from abuse and exploitation, including child labor, and improve the quality of education. (30) Research was unable to determine whether actions were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Free Primary Education Program†	Provides funding to ensure free primary education to children for a period of seven years, starting from age six and ending at seventh grade. (25,31) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Eswatini.

The offices of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister continued to work with the Trafficking in Persons Secretariat and the Catholic Church to explore the establishment of a shelter to improve the quality of care available to survivors of human trafficking. (9) In addition, the Deputy Prime Minister's office, which oversees child welfare issues, launched a campaign to register children to help them gain access to schools. Along with this, the Eswatini Broadcast Service runs a radio program that focuses on raising awareness on the worst forms

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of child labor. (3) Although Eswatini has programs to improve education access, it lacks programs to address child labor, including in domestic work and herding. (9,32)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Eswatini (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Adopt legislation that prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children under 18 are comprehensive and include herding.	2012 – 2022
	Establish the compulsory education age to 15 so that is consistent with the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2022
	Establish by law 9 years of free basic public education to cover lower secondary education for all children, including non-citizens.	2018 – 2022
	Adopt legislation that regulates the work performed through traditional practices like <i>Kuhlehla</i> and ensure that the law explicitly states the voluntary nature of participation in such work.	2017 – 2022
Enforcement	Collect and publish comprehensive statistics on labor law enforcement efforts, including information about the labor inspectorate's budget, training for labor inspectors, number of inspections conducted, and the number of penalties imposed and collected.	2020 – 2022
	Provide adequate resources, including transportation and fuel, to labor inspectors and criminal investigators so they can fulfill their mandates.	2013 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 18 to about 26 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2016 – 2022
	Collect and publish comprehensive statistics on criminal enforcement efforts, including information about training for law enforcement personnel, number of investigations, number of prosecutions, number of convictions, and the number of penalties imposed and collected.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and have the necessary resources to be able to fulfill their mandates as intended.	2019 – 2022
	Improve coordination and communication among staff of coordinating bodies.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Implement child labor-related policies, including the Action Program on Combating Child Labor in Eswatini, the National Strategic Framework and Action Plan to Combat People Trafficking, and the National Children's Policy.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that children are able to access free basic education, including by eliminating school fees for lower secondary and upper secondary education and hiring the necessary number of teachers for all areas.	2013 – 2022
	Publish updates on the implementation of the Free Primary Education Program on an annual basis.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure a minimum quality of standard care in shelters for victims of child trafficking.	2017 – 2022
	Develop social protection programs to assist children engaged in child labor in domestic work and herding.	2014 – 2022

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In 2022, Ethiopia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government supported a study of child domestic servitude to learn how to better prevent this form of forced child labor. The Ministry of Justice also worked with the International Organization for Migration to launch new standard operating procedures to identify potential victims of human trafficking and refer them to services. However, children in Ethiopia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work and in commercial sexual exploitation. Children also perform dangerous tasks in traditional weaving. Ethiopian law does not include free basic education or a compulsory age for education, leaving children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Additionally, social programs to address child labor have not sufficiently targeted sectors with high incidences of child labor, including agriculture and domestic work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ethiopia.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

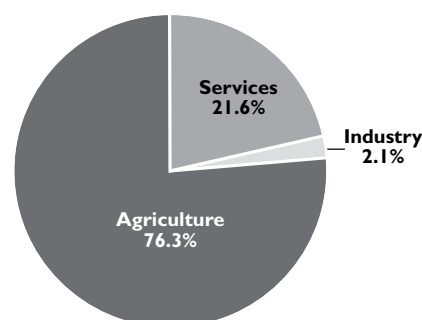
Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	24.3 (6,761,640)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	56.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	16.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		68.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Labour Force Survey (NLFS), 2021. (2)

These data are not comparable with data presented in last year's report due to changes in survey source, survey questionnaire, or age range surveyed.

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Planting and harvesting coffee, <i>khat</i> , and sesame (3-9)
	Herding livestock, including cattle (8,10)
	Fishing† (4)
Industry	Mining† gold and quarrying† (4,11)
	Construction,† including carrying heavy loads† and digging (3,4,6,8)
	Repairing motor vehicles and motorcycles (4)
Services	Producing handicrafts, including pottery and traditional handwoven textiles (4)
	Domestic work (4,8,12)
	Unpaid household services, including carrying heavy loads† of water and firewood (4,8,12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Street work, including shoe shining, weight measurement, assisting taxi drivers, vending, portering, and begging (4,8,13,14)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,15-17)
	Forced labor in domestic work, herding, street vending, construction, and traditional weaving of handwoven textiles (13,17-19)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (3,11,13,17)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Ethiopian children voluntarily travel to Amhara to harvest sesame. This sector is allegedly linked to overland smuggling networks, with children earning enough to fund passage to Europe via North Africa. (5,7,20) Many others journey through Djibouti en route to Persian Gulf states, where they are often intercepted, repatriated, and later routed to a transition center in Addis Ababa. (7) Traffickers exploit children from rural areas surrounding Addis Ababa and other regions of the country for forced labor in the weaving industry, street vending, construction, and domestic work. (19,21,22) Moreover, children in Oromia and Amhara reportedly harvest and sell *khat*, a stimulant to which they may become addicted due to contact with the plants' excretions during harvest. (3,6,7,23,24) Children who begin as voluntary migrants may be forced into commercial sexual exploitation or become victims of forced labor. (3,16,25) Research on child trafficking survivors from the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR) and Oromia indicates that 85 percent were removed from or escaped domestic work. (18) The children surveyed were mostly from families that continue to play a role in financing and coercing their children to go abroad or to urban areas to look for work. (16,26) A large-sample size study of female child domestic workers in Addis Ababa found the average number of hours worked per week by these girls was 55 hours, well beyond the ILO's guidelines of 14 hours per week for light work. Additionally, 52 percent of these girls were victims of human trafficking. (19) Trusted community members, known as *manamasas*, recruit and groom vulnerable youth on behalf of local and international human trafficking syndicates. (22,27)

The ongoing conflict between government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) continued during the reporting period and halted November 2, 2022, when a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was signed between the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) and the TPLF in Pretoria, South Africa. (23,28) There were unconfirmed reports that both the TPLF and GOE-aligned forces recruited and used child soldiers during the conflict. (3,22,23,29) Some women and girls have reportedly been forced by military elements to have sex in exchange for basic commodities, though the specific military elements remain unknown. (30,31) In addition, emergency humanitarian aid distribution networks and essential services have been disrupted by conflict in the Tigray, Afar, and Amhara regions. (32,33)

Conditions in Ethiopia are also influenced by an ongoing drought, which is increasing food insecurity and internal displacement. (34) There are an estimated 2.73 million IDPs across the country due to conflict or drought. (32) Internally displaced children are acutely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including child labor. (35)

With infrastructure for remote learning non-existent, many children remained out of school for many months during the COVID-19 pandemic, and some have still not returned. (23,36) Armed conflicts and resulting humanitarian crises have also disrupted education in Ethiopia. As a result of violence, some 2.3 million children in Tigray were unable to attend school, while estimates of all Ethiopian children out of school due to conflict or drought ranged between 3.4 and 3.6 million. (34,36,37) Children in rural areas also face additional barriers to education, including the distance they must travel to reach school; a lack of sanitation, which especially affects adolescent girls; sexual harassment; the requirement to pay for uniforms and supplies; and a lack of teachers. (8) These factors increased children's risk of entering the workforce at a young age. (6,38,39)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Ethiopia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor




Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor (Cont.)

Convention	Ratification
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Ethiopia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the omission of traditional weaving from the country's hazardous work list.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 4.1, 89.1, 89.2, and 185 of the Labor Proclamation 1156/2019 (40)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	15	Article 36.1(d) of the Constitution; Article 89 of the Labor Proclamation 1156/2019 (40,41)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 89.3, 89.4, and 186.1 of the Labor Proclamation 1156/2019; Directive on the Restating of Activities Prohibited for Young Workers (40,42)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 18.3 of the Constitution; Articles 596, 597, and 637 of the Criminal Code; Articles 2–4 and 6 of the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No. 1178-2020 (41,43,44)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 18.2 of the Constitution; Articles 597 and 635–637 of the Criminal Code; Articles 3.1–3.5 and 4.1 of the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No. 1178-2020 (41,43-45)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 634–636 of the Criminal Code; Articles 3.1–3.5 and 4.1 of the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No. 1178-2020 (43,44)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 525 of the Criminal Code; Articles 3.1–3.5 and 4.1 of the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No. 1178-2020 (43,44)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18‡	Article 270 of the Criminal Code (43)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Articles 3.1, 3.2, and 4.1–4.3 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (44)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

* Country has no conscription (43)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (13)

In 2022, Ethiopia published Directive No. 813/2021 on the Restating of Activities Prohibited for Young Workers, which had been signed and entered into force on August 24, 2021, replacing an earlier directive. (23,42) In addition to listing the prohibited categories of work, it provides weight limits for loads carried or transported by young workers and specifies employer responsibilities to verify worker age and ensure workplace awareness of the protections for young workers. (42) However, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover traditional weaving, an area of work in which there is evidence that children use dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools. (40,42,46,47) Moreover, Article 89.5 of the Labor Proclamation allows children ages 15 to 16 to engage in certain forms of hazardous work during a government-approved and inspected vocational training course. (23,40) This contradicts ILO Convention 138, which prohibits hazardous work for

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all children under the age of 16. (46,48) The GOE notes that, in practice, children begin apprenticeships after the completion of 10th grade, typically at age 16 or 17. (49) Lastly, while Ethiopia has a policy encouraging public funding of primary education, its laws do not provide for free public education or a compulsory age for education. (13,44,50)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Skills (MOLS)	Conducts labor inspections of formal worksites through its regional Bureaus of Labor and Skills. (8) Through its National Referral Mechanism (NRM), coordinates referrals of survivors to social services providers. (26,51)
Ethiopian Federal Police Commission	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (8) Addresses child trafficking and assists vulnerable children through its Special Child Protection Units in Addis Ababa and other major cities. (8,22,52) Refers cases to the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MOWSA), which develops and implements programs to protect vulnerable children, maintains rehabilitation centers, and coordinates foster families for children rescued from the worst forms of child labor. (8,23)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes criminal violations of child labor laws, including through its Special Investigative Unit for Women and Children. (8)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Ethiopia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Skills (MOLS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2,524,544 (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	537 (3)	Unknown (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (3,40)	Yes (8,40)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	40,639 (3)	24,989 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (40)	Yes (8,40)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (8)

The government did not provide information concerning labor inspectorate funding in 2022. Data on child labor violations are not aggregated at the national level, and the government did not publish the number of child labor violations identified as a result of its labor inspections. (8) Labor inspectors refer child labor violations to judicial authorities, who are able to assess penalties. (8,40) While the official number of labor inspectors was unreported, local NGOs and civil society organizations estimate there to be between 550 and 700 inspectors. (8,23) This suggests that Ethiopia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (8,53,54) MOLS and other stakeholders report that a lack of resources and poor coordination among agencies hampered their ability to enforce child labor laws. (3,8)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Ethiopia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of published information about penalties for child labor violations.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (3)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	11 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	9 (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (55)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (8)

The government provided some criminal law enforcement data for inclusion in this report that had not been reported in recent years. In the 11 cases of suspected child labor crimes reported to have been investigated, the government identified 13 alleged violations of child labor laws and initiated 9 prosecutions. (8) However, the number of convictions achieved, and penalties imposed, remains unknown. (8) The government continued to disproportionately focus on transnational trafficking crimes and did not take adequate action to address internal trafficking crimes, including child domestic servitude and child sex trafficking, despite the scale of the problem. (22,23)

Ethiopian immigration and border patrol authorities refer human trafficking survivors to NGO-run shelters, where they are given first aid and assistance to return home. NGOs reported that many of those receiving services were younger than age 18. (21,26) In 2022, the Ministry of Justice worked with the IOM to improve mechanisms for referring victims to services. (8) In November 2022, the government updated its Standard Operating Procedures for victim identification and validated and launched its new National Referral Mechanism, which includes a directory of service providers. (23,51)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including overlapping mandates, limited budgets, and ineffective coordination among key agencies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committees	The National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor coordinates activities on the worst forms of child labor. Members include MOLS, MOWSA, and the Ministry of Education. (3,8,16,56) The National Steering Committee Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children develops action plans and coordinates activities to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (16) Research was unable to determine whether coordination activities were undertaken during the reporting period. (8)

Limited committee budgets, overlapping mandates, and poor coordination between the committees and relevant agencies hindered coordination efforts to address child labor at the national and regional levels. (3,8)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation of policies to address child labor.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2021–2025)	Includes guidelines on child labor identification, withdrawal, reintegration, and education. Overseen by the National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (56) The National Action Plan (NAP) was created in 2021 with input from government ministries, ILO, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU), the Confederation of Ethiopian Employers Federation, and other NGOs. (3) In 2022, although there was no update on the status of the NAP, MOLS and CARE Ethiopia prepared a joint action plan dedicated to the prevention and reduction of child labor that was funded by the USDOL's She Thrives project. (8,57) In addition, with assistance from ILO, CETU launched guidance on reducing child labor, human trafficking, and forced labor. (8,55)
Five-Year Strategic Plan (2021–2025) for Migration Management	Aims to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants; supports safe, humane, and orderly migration; and supports efforts to reduce child labor as it occurs in the context of human trafficking and migration. (8,55) The government implemented several activities under the plan during the reporting period, including working group meetings, awareness raising, law enforcement efforts, victim identification and referral to services, and validating the NRM. (21,23)
National Education and Children's Policies	Promote children's rights and aim to improve access to education. The National Children's Policy facilitates access to quality primary and secondary education for out-of-school youth, including in rural areas, and provides measures against exploitation and human trafficking. (58) The Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018–2030) aims to make education free and compulsory, while the Education and Training Policy prioritizes government support for education through grade 10. (39,50) The Pastoralist Area Education Strategy provides for alternative education in pastoralist communities, while the National Technical & Vocational Education & Training Strategy aims to improve access to vocational education for girls and out-of-school children. (59,60) The government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Sector Development Roadmap, the National Technical & Vocational Education & Training Strategy, or the National Youth Policy. (59-61) The Ethiopian government did not provide an update on progress of these policies. (8)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (61,62)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
The Freedom Fund	Works to reduce prevalence of child domestic servitude with support from the Government of Ethiopia and the USDOS Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. (8,19) The Freedom Fund conducted a study of child domestic workers in Addis Ababa published in October 2022 that concluded that over half of the girls studied are victims of human trafficking. (19)
World Vision Programs	Included Effective Approaches to Ending the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2019–2022), an international program designed to test and measure innovative approaches to reduce the worst forms of child labor, and which targeted approximately 500,000 at-risk youth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, and Ethiopia, including victims of child commercial sexual exploitation and child soldiering, and children engaged in hazardous work. The program's efforts were coordinated by World Vision, with funding by a consortium of NGOs and multilaterals, including UN Global Compact, the Global Compact UK, War Child UK, Thompson Reuters, and the private sector. (7,63,64) This program supported children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in Dera, Libo Kemekem, and Gondar Zuria districts of Amhara. (3) World Vision has remained active during the conflict in Northern Ethiopia, addressing food insecurity and gender-based violence. (65)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
Multilateral Projects†	The Ethiopia General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity (GEQIP-E) (2017–2025)† is a \$583 million World Bank-funded program implemented by the Ministry of Education and development partners to improve education quality and access. Originally slated to end in 2022, GEQIP-E has been extended to 2025 to better address issues compounded by the pandemic and recent conflict. (66,67) Despite challenges due to the conflict, the project reported achieving results in several project indicators, including the improvement of girls-to-boys ratio in grade 8 in marginalized regions such as Afar, Somali, and Benishangul-Gumuz, from 63 percent in 2016 to 71.2 percent in 2022, and increased grades 1 and 2 enrollment rates from 76 percent in 2016 to 88.6 percent in 2022. (23,68) UNICEF-funded programs include Child-to-Child and Accelerated School Readiness programs, which extend educational opportunities to internally displaced children, and the Integrated Safety Nets Program (2017–2023). (6) UNICEF, the Swedish International Development Agency, and MOLS also jointly fund the Urban Productive Safety Net Program, which aims to build upon efforts to address nutritional and educational outcomes in Amhara and Addis Ababa through cash transfers and linking participants to basic social services. (6,69) During the reporting period, UNICEF reached over 295,000 children through formal or non-formal education across drought- and conflict-afflicted regions. (70)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is co-funded by the Government of Ethiopia. (11)

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3,71,72)

Although the government participates in and implements several programs to address child labor, programs do not sufficiently target sectors with high incidences of child labor, such as agriculture and domestic work. (56) There is also a lack throughout the country of rehabilitation and reintegration centers for victims of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (15,16)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Ethiopia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age at which children may perform dangerous tasks during vocational training from age 15 to age 16, in line with ILO Convention 138.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive, including hazardous tasks in traditional weaving.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2020 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic education.	2012 – 2022
	Establish by law a compulsory education age that extends to the minimum age for employment of 15 years.	2012 – 2022
Enforcement	Gather and publish information related to labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, child labor violations found, and penalties imposed.	2022
	Employ at least 964 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 38.6 million people.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient resources to conduct inspections in all sectors and are able to coordinate adequately with other agencies.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that both domestic and transnational child trafficking cases are investigated and punished.	2013 – 2022
	Gather, disaggregate, and publish information on penalties applied and collected, trainings conducted, and convictions obtained related to child labor violations.	2009 – 2022
	Prosecute perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment of children into armed conflict, according to the law.	2021 – 2022
	Clarify individual mandates for coordinating mechanisms charged with addressing child labor, and enhance inter-committee communication, coordination, and collaboration.	2015 – 2022
Coordination	Provide adequate funding to coordinating bodies so that they may effectively coordinate activities related to the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Sector Development Program, the National Technical & Vocational Education & Training Strategy, and the National Youth Policy.	2013 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor to address child labor on an annual basis.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education for all children by decreasing the distance to schools in rural areas, hiring additional teachers, constructing sanitation facilities, and eliminating school-related costs.	2010 – 2022
	Develop or expand social protection programs to address child labor, including in agriculture and domestic work.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that social services necessary to prevent child labor, such as rehabilitation and reintegration centers, are available throughout the country.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure student safety while at school, including by ensuring environments free from sexual harassment and preventing schools from being attacked by armed actors.	2021 – 2022

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Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)

NO ADVANCEMENT

Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), in 2022, the government made no advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) also continued to implement a practice that delays advancement to prevent child labor. There is no functioning labor inspectorate in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) to enforce labor laws. Labor inspections are a key tool for identifying child labor violations, and their absence makes children more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. In addition, the minimum age of 14 for work and 16 for hazardous work are not in compliance with international standards, and the law does not prohibit adults from using, procuring, and offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs.




I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that child labor exists in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). (1)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

British Overseas Territories recognize the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the UK but are not constitutionally part of the UK. They are self-governing, except in the areas of foreign affairs and defense. (2) The Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) generally incorporate English Law Ordinances to the extent permitted by local circumstances and subject to modification by local laws. Under Article 35(4) of the ILO Constitution, when the UK ratifies a Convention, the Territory must consider if it will accept the Convention. (2,3) If the Convention is accepted, it is considered applicable to that Territory. (2) The following Conventions have been extended to and accepted by the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) (Table 1).

Table 1. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The Government of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 2). However, gaps exist in the Falkland Islands' (Islas Malvinas') legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the failure to criminalize the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Section 3 of the Employment of Children Ordinance (4)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	16	Section 3 of the Employment of Children Ordinance; Sections 2, 3, and 4A of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (4,5)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Section 3 of the Employment of Children Ordinance; Section 3 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (4,5)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 117 of the Crimes Ordinance of 2014; Chapter 1, Section 4 of the Constitution Order (6,7)

Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)

NO ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 87 of the Crimes Ordinance of 2014; Part I, Sections 57–60 of the Sexual Offenses Act (6,8)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 259–263 of the Crimes Ordinance of 2014; Part I of the Sexual Offenses Act (6,8)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 10 of the Falkland Islands Defense Ordinance (9)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Education Ordinance; Chapter 1, Section 12 of the Constitution Order (7,10)
Free Public Education	Yes		Chapter 1, Section 12 of the Constitution Order (7)

* Country has no conscription (2,11)

The minimum age of 14 for work and the minimum age of 16 for hazardous work are not in compliance with international standards. In addition, the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (5,12) The Government of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, other than industrial undertakings. (4,5) The law also does not prohibit adults from using, procuring, or offering a child for the production or trafficking of drugs. In addition, there is no existing law that criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the Government of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) has established an institutional mechanism for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, although the absence of a labor inspectorate in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) may impede the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 3). (1)

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Royal Falkland Islands Police	Enforce the laws of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), including those protecting children against abuses. Participate in the Safeguarding Children Board and lead the Board's trainings on understanding child sexual exploitation. (13-15)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) (Table 4).

Table 4. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2020 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2017 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for hazardous work from 16 to 18 and ensure that national law determines prohibited work activities for children.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2012 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish a labor inspectorate to enforce labor laws, including laws pertaining to child labor.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, Fiji made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Fiji Bureau of Statistics carried out a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in 2021 and published the results in August 2022, providing new information on the prevalence of children engaged in child labor, including hazardous work. Additionally, the government convicted a child sex trafficker, resulting in a prison sentence. However, children in Fiji are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Fiji's light work provisions are not specific enough to prevent children from being involved in child labor. Furthermore, the government lacks social programs to provide services to children exploited in commercial sexual exploitation and forced domestic work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Fiji. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	29.3 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	50.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		117.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2021. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Cutting† and harvesting† sugarcane (3,4)
	Fishing† and deep-sea diving for fish, shellfish, and sea cucumbers† (3-6)
Services	Street work, including vending, washing cars, and selling fruit and other foods (3,7,8)
	Domestic work (3)
	Working in garages, retail shops, or roadside stalls (3-5)
	Garbage scavenging† (5)
	Collecting scrap metal† (3,4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,9)
	Use in the production of pornography (5)
	Forced labor in domestic work (9)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (3,10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children younger than 15 are employed in agriculture, retail shops, roadside stalls, public markets, domestic work, automotive garages, and car washing businesses. Children also work part of the year as cane cutters during the

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sugar harvesting season. (5) The 2022 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey found that 15 percent of children were involved in economic activities for more hours than legally allowed at their age. It also found that 18.4 percent of children in Fiji work under hazardous conditions that include carrying heavy loads, working with dangerous tools, operating heavy machinery, and exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity. (11)







Children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Fiji, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, including by family members, taxi drivers, foreign tourists, businesspersons, and crews on foreign fishing vessels. (9,12) Research also shows that children in Fiji are subjected to online sexual exploitation, including child pornography. (5) Parents sometimes send their children to live with families in cities or near schools to facilitate their continuing education and to perform light household work. Research found that some of these children are vulnerable to involuntary domestic work or are forced to engage in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, shelter, or school fees. (9,12) In addition, children are sexually exploited in massage parlors and brothels owned by Chinese nationals, and child sex trafficking victims are driven to hotels or private yachts at the request of foreigners. (9)

Rising levels of poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, including Tropical Cyclone Cody, increased the number of children engaging in child labor, often in street work, during which they are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. (5,9) The pandemic continued to profoundly impact students' access to education in Fiji, particularly affecting children from low-income families and single-parent families, as well as children with special education needs. (3,5) Financial barriers also prevented parents from sending their children to school because they could not meet the costs of school supplies, footwear, school uniforms, and meals for their children. In addition, children in remote areas often do not have schools in their area and have issues connecting to the internet to access online learning materials. (5)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Fiji has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Fiji's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including identification of light work activities permissible for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 92 of the Employment Relations Promulgation (13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 40 of the Employment Relations (Administration) Regulations; Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (14,15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6 and 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 20 and 21 of the Immigration Act; Articles 102, 103, 111, and 121 of the Crimes Decree (13,16,17)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 91 and 256 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 2, 17–20, 22, and Schedule 2 of the Immigration Act; Articles 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (13,16,17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 225–227 of the Crimes Decree; Article 62A of the Juveniles (Amendment) Act (13,17-19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 58 of the Juveniles Act (13,20)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (21)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (21)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Compulsory Education Orders 1997 and 1998 (22,23)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 31 of the Constitution of Fiji (24)

* Country has no conscription (21)

The Employment Relations Promulgation specifies the conditions under which children ages 13 to 15 may engage in light work, but it does not include a list of activities that are permissible. (13)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR)	The primary agency responsible for enforcing and ensuring compliance with child labor laws and monitoring the status of child labor employment. Under the Employment Relations Promulgation, labor inspectors of MEPIR can conduct workplace inspections to identify child labor law violations and issue penalties for breaches of child labor laws. (5) Maintains a 24-hour phone line to accept reports of child labor and refers children to social services when appropriate. (3,5) Children found working illegally during inspections are generally first returned to their families, and MEPIR will involve the Department of Social Welfare if it deems the situation warrants further intervention. (5) The Employment Relations Tribunal adjudicates alleged violations of child labor provisions. (5,25) Within MEPIR, the Labor Inspection Compliance Unit raises awareness on issues of child labor and is responsible for monitoring and training the labor inspectorate. As in previous years, MEPIR collected data on child labor cases and inspections but did not publish them. (5,6)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Fiji Police Force	Investigates criminal violations related to child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. (5) Refers children found in cases of the worst forms of child labor on a case-by-case basis to the Department of Social Welfare. (3) Maintains a Human Trafficking Unit, Child Sexual Services Unit, and a separate Children's Unit, which screens cases involving children for trafficking indicators. Although anti-trafficking training is provided for new police officers, research suggests that these trainings are insufficient and investigations conducted by the police are inconsistent. (9)
Department of Immigration	Responsible for efforts to address human trafficking. (5) Enforces the Immigration Act, which includes the prohibition of trafficking in children. (5,16) Coordinates with the Fiji Police Force to investigate cases involving underage survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, which are then tried in the criminal court system. (26) Department of Immigration officials and the police meet every quarter to discuss foreign nationals involved in human trafficking, but research was unable to determine if the department took actions to address foreign nationals involved in human trafficking in 2022. (5)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, the lack of available information hinders understanding of labor law enforcement efforts.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4.5 million (3,27)	\$4.57 million‡ (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (3)	36 (5,6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (13)	Yes (13)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (13)	Yes (13)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (5)

‡ Data are from August 2022 to July 2023.

Inspectors were trained on the enforcement of child labor laws and hazardous child labor laws during the reporting period. Labor inspectors are legally allowed to enter, inspect, and examine workplaces; require employers to produce any worker or any documents or records, including registers of children; interview employers and workers; and issue penalties of \$44.71 (FJ\$100). (5) Labor inspectors are required by law to issue violations upon encountering child labor law violations. Targeted areas for inspections include high-risk areas, such as sugarcane farms located in the western and northern parts of the country. (5) The government did not provide information on the number of labor inspections and child labor violations in 2022. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, the lack of available information hinders understanding of criminal law enforcement efforts.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	1 (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (5)

During the reporting period, the government sentenced a child sex trafficker to 30 months in prison. (9) The government did not provide information on the number of investigations and prosecutions initiated in 2022. (5)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of public reporting on activities.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Coordinating Committee on Children	Coordinates child labor and child safety enforcement efforts. Comprises the Fiji Police Force, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Solicitor General's Office, the Department of Social Welfare, MEPIR, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and NGOs that work on child labor issues. (5,26,28) Research was unable to determine whether the National Coordinating Committee on Children was active during the reporting period. (5,6)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Addressed, developed, and implemented strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. A multinational strategic framework program that consisted of 14 South Pacific nations. (29) Instrumental in shaping priorities to address child labor issues in the country. The government of Fiji continued to support the implementation of this strategy in 2022. (5)
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2021–2026)	Sets yearly targets to achieve the goals outlined in the Human Trafficking Strategy. (30) Includes a special focus on assisting child survivors of trafficking and other objectives such as strengthening counter-human trafficking mechanisms, protecting survivors, suppressing criminal networks, prosecuting traffickers, and sharing intelligence to address the sexual exploitation of children. (30,31) In 2022, the government allocated funding and staff to implement the action plan. (9,32)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (3)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	Prioritized children's rights, including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. (33,34) UNICEF Pacific facilitated the Child Protection Training for 27 welfare officers in 2022. (35-37)
Education Assistance Programs†	The Free Education Grant ensures that all children with Fiji citizenship have access to free and compulsory primary education. (38) Provides bus passes and free textbooks. Also supplies boats and motors so children and teachers can commute to school. (38,39) This grant continued during the reporting period. (5) The Food Voucher and Bus Fare Assistance program provides \$24 in food vouchers and subsidized bus fares to families with combined annual income of less than \$7,400 to offset the cost of education for children attending remote schools. (40) During the reporting period, the government continued to provide transport assistance to students, and allocated approximately \$31 million for the Free Education Grant in fiscal year 2021–2022. (3,27) The government allocated \$74.82 million to various programs promoting inclusive education for the 2022–2023 fiscal year. The government continued providing free education, free textbooks, transportation allowances, and tertiary education scholarships during the reporting period. (5)
Child Protection Program and Allowance‡	Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) Child Protection Program that raises awareness of, and enacts recommendations from, the UN CRC. (39) MWCPA Child Protection Allowance assists single mothers, widows, and children. (41) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Child Protection Program and Allowance during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Fiji.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (5)

Although Fiji has programs to address education and poverty alleviation, it has no programs to address child labor, including for children who may be sent to live with other families and subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced domestic work. (39,42) The Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation's Child Services Unit, in partnership with UNICEF, provided 5 modules of child protection training for 27 welfare officers on important aspects of case management, including interview skills, child development, and indicators of abuse. The last two modules took place in 2022. (35-37) The Department of Social Welfare operated four homes for child survivors of trafficking. (32)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Fiji (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be undertaken.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish labor law enforcement information, including the number of labor inspections conducted at the worksite, the number of child labor violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, and the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the Fiji Police Department receives adequate anti-trafficking training and investigates violations.	2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement information, including the number of investigations conducted and prosecutions initiated.	2020 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure the coordinating body is active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Child Protection Program and Allowance and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022
	Provide support services for children removed from commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced domestic work, such as housing, medical care, psychological support, and job skills training.	2010 – 2022
	Improve access to education for children in remote areas by establishing schools nearer to these communities or by improving access to adequate technology to allow for remote learning.	2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, by ensuring that school lunch, uniforms, footwear, and supplies are provided for children whose families cannot afford these essentials.	2022

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In 2022, Gabon made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government worked with the United Nations Children's Fund on a campaign to provide birth certificates to more than 10,000 children, and increased funding, bed capacity, and in-kind support for shelters. However, despite government initiatives to address child labor, Gabon is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because it continued to implement a practice that delayed advancement to eliminate child labor. The government failed to provide evidence it conducted worksite inspections during the reporting period. Labor inspections are a key tool for identifying child labor violations, and their absence makes children more vulnerable to child labor. Children in Gabon are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in domestic work.



Furthermore, Gabonese law regarding minimum age for work provisions only applies to children in formal employment relationships, which does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected by the minimum age for work. In addition, Gabon does not have a policy that addresses all relevant forms of child labor and lacks social programs to address child labor in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Gabon.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	22.3 (83,073)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	23.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		78.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from *Deuxième Enquête Démographique et de Santé au Gabon (EDSG-II)*, 2012. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Fishing, including the production and sale of smoked fish (3-6)
Industry	Working in sand quarries† (3,5-7)
	Working in brick factories (3,5,6)
Services	Domestic work (3,5,6,8)
	Street vending, including windshield cleaning, cleaning market spaces at night, and carrying heavy loads† (3,4,6,8)
	Garbage scavenging (3,5,6)
	Working in transportation, including minibuses,† and as mechanics (3,6,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in markets, restaurants, handicraft shops, sand quarries, gold mines, farming, animal husbandry, fishing, domestic work, begging, and as mechanics (6,9)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5,8,10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Gabon

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT







Gabon is primarily a destination and transit country for victims of child trafficking from other countries in Central and West Africa. (3,6,11,12) Some families entrust their children to intermediaries who promise education and safe work opportunities; instead, these children are sometimes subjected to child trafficking for labor exploitation. (11) There are reports that child victims of forced labor mainly work in the informal sector as street vendors, often selling beauty products and fruits. Boys also often work in fishing, microbus transportation, mechanics shops, and cleaning market spaces after they have closed. (3,4,6,13) In addition, reports indicate that West African human traffickers exploit children from their countries of origin to work in Libreville markets and in other urban centers, including Port-Gentil. (1,3,13)

Although the Law on General Education guarantees the right to free and compulsory education, in practice, students must pay for school fees, which may be prohibitive. (5,14) Due to a lack of teachers and poor school infrastructure, education beyond primary school is often unavailable in rural areas. (3,6,15) In addition, children living in remote areas may not receive birth certificates, which are often required for school enrollment, and children who do not attend school are more vulnerable to child labor. (3,6,15) In 2022, as part of the Citizenship and Social Protection program conducted in conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Gabonese Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Rights delivered birth certificates to 10,196 children in the Estuaire Province. (16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Gabon has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Gabon's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Article 177 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Decree N° 0651/PR/MTEPS on Establishing Individual Exceptions to the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (17-19)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 1 of the Hazardous Work List (17,18,20)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2, 3, and 5 of the Hazardous Work List (17,18,20)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 225 to 225-7 of Gabon's 2020 Revised Penal Code; Articles 3, 12, and 13 of Law N° 09/04 Preventing and Fighting Against Child Trafficking; Article 4 of the Labor Code (17,21,22)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 3, 11–14, and 20 of Law N° 09/04 Preventing and Fighting Against Child Trafficking; Articles 225 to 225-7 of Gabon's 2020 Revised Penal Code (21,22)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 260, 261, and 263 of the Penal Code; Articles 225 to 225-7 and Articles 281-3 to 281-5 of Gabon's 2020 Revised Penal Code (22,23)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 281-1 of Gabon's 2020 Revised Penal Code (22)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 17 of the Law on the Organization of National Defense and Public Security (24)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 17 of the Law on the Organization of National Defense and Public Security (24)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 1 of the Constitution; Article 2 of Act N° 21/2011 on General Education; Article 340-6 of the Revised 2020 Penal Code (14,22,25)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 1.18 and 1.19 of the Constitution; Article 2 of Act N° 21/2011 on General Education (14,25)

* Country has no conscription (9)

Although the Labor Code prohibits work by children under age 16, minimum age protections do not apply to children outside of formal work relationships, which does not conform to international standards that require all children be protected under the law. (17,21,22,26) In addition, Gabon's light work provision permits children under age 16 to perform light work with parental permission, but it does not set a minimum age, determine the activities in which light work may be permitted, prescribe the number of hours per week for light work, or specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken. (19)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in Gabon may impede the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment, Public Function, Labor and Professional Training	Receives, investigates, and addresses child labor complaints. (6,15)
Ministry of the Interior's Police Force	Enforces laws, investigates violations of the worst forms of child labor, and refers cases to the Ministry of Justice for prosecution. (3,15) Refers survivors of child trafficking to the Ministry of Social Affairs, which assists vulnerable children by operating shelters, and facilitating their repatriation or resettlement processes. (3,13)
Ministry of Justice	Enforces child labor laws by prosecuting child labor cases. Coordinates the activities of agencies responsible for enforcing criminal laws against forced child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. (3) Assists in supporting victims of child trafficking while prosecutors and investigators prepare their cases. (3,7)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in Gabon may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws. (Table 6)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (3)	Unknown (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (17)	Yes (17)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (3)	No (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	0 (3)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (3)	N/A (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (3)	N/A (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (3)	N/A (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	N/A (3)	N/A (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	N/A (3)	N/A (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (17)	Yes (17)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (3)	No (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (6)

The government failed to provide evidence it conducted worksite inspections during the reporting period. (6) Labor inspections are a key tool for identifying child labor violations, and their absence makes children more vulnerable to child labor. The government also did not provide information on labor inspectorate funding, or the number of labor inspectors. (6) While the number of labor inspectors is unknown, research suggests that Gabon does not have an adequate number of inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (6,27,28) In addition, research indicates that inadequate resources—including training for inspectors, transportation, and fuel—may have hampered the labor inspectorate's capacity to adequately conduct inspections, and enforce labor laws throughout the country. (3,6,13,15) Labor inspectors in Gabon are also responsible for reconciling labor disputes, which may detract from their primary duty of inspection. (17)

Although inspectors have the authority to propose penalties to the court in accordance with legal guidelines, they do not have the authority to impose penalties since this is the purview of the court. The police take note of violations of child labor law, carry out investigations when further information is necessary, and refer cases to the court system within the Ministry of Justice's jurisdiction. (6)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Gabon took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (3)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (6)
Number of Convictions	6 (3,29)	10 (6,9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (3,29)	Yes (6,9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (6)

The government did not provide information on the number of investigations conducted or the number of prosecutions initiated for inclusion in this report. However, during the reporting period, approximately 20 children received support from social services after being identified as alleged victims of child labor violations by NGOs or during other government inspections. (6,9) The government convicted 3 individuals on child trafficking charges, including a Togolese national, issuing prison sentences of 8 to 10 years. (9,30) In June

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

2022, the government provided capacity-building training on trafficking in persons to magistrates, which was organized by the Ministry of Justice and UNICEF. (31) Also in 2022, representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Rights, the Ministry of Health, Social Protection and National Solidarity (MSPNS), as well as NGO representatives, worked together on an informal basis to identify cases of exploitative child labor. (6) Research indicates that other coordinating committees exist, but lack sufficient funding and members sometimes use their personal funds to support human trafficking survivors. (5,7,32)

Despite these efforts, research has shown that a lack of resources, including transportation, access to fuel, insufficient training, infrequent convening of the Criminal Court, a backlog of cases, and weak coordination among enforcement agencies hampered criminal enforcement efforts. In addition, evidence indicates that some child trafficking perpetrators falsified documents to make victims appear older than age 18 to avoid punishment under Gabon's child trafficking laws. (5,8,13,29,31)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of sufficient infrastructure and staff.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Observatory of the Rights of the Child (ONDE)	Coordinates the implementation of the UN CRC, including the promotion of children's rights to education, and protection against all forms of exploitation and abuse. Establishes and oversees committees to protect children's rights in all provinces. (3,33) Serves as a mechanism for cooperation and consultation between private and public sector actors who work on the rights of the child. Coordination efforts are limited due to the lack of an ONDE office and limited staff. (33) The Observatory was inactive during the reporting period. (9)

Although the National Observatory of the Rights of the Child exists, research found no evidence that the committee functions as a coordinating mechanism to address all forms of child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government has active policies to address child labor. (9)

Although Gabon has a National Youth Policy, child labor elimination and prevention strategies have not been integrated into it. (34) In 2022, the government signed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperative Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2027 for Gabon. The new Cooperative Framework includes the aim of improving access to education, which helps reduce vulnerability to child labor. (35)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 9). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 9. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Shelters for Children in Need	Provide social services to survivors of child trafficking. The government provides support to shelters run by civil society organizations. (7,12,13,36) Victims receive medical care, literacy training, and reintegration support. (3,7) During the reporting period the government increased funding for shelters by 50 percent. The government specifically expanded support for the Angondjé shelter, in partnership with local NGOs, facilitating an increase in bed capacity for child trafficking survivors from 80 to 120. (6,31) Additionally, the government promoted capacity building among individuals who provide physiotherapy, and speech therapy to children with special needs. (6) However, research indicates that shelter space is still insufficient to accommodate all survivors of human trafficking as well as other vulnerable children due to inadequate funding. (3,5,7,10)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

Research found no evidence of a government program that aims to address child labor in domestic work or commercial sexual exploitation. (5,7)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Gabon (Table 10).

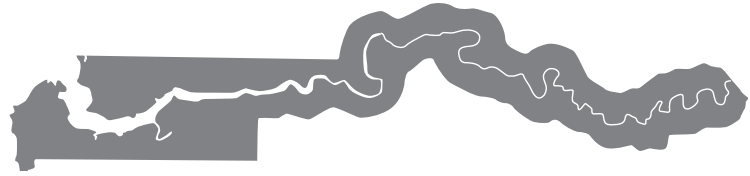
Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that minimum age protections are extended to children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the legal framework for light work establishes a minimum age no younger than age 13, determines activities that are considered light work, and specifies the conditions under which light work may be undertaken.	2013 – 2022
	Establish criminal prohibitions for the recruitment of children under age 18 for use in armed conflict by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on the funding level for the labor inspectorate and number of labor inspectors, and ensure both labor inspectors and criminal investigators receive adequate funding, training, transportation, and fuel to carry out inspections and investigations.	2009 – 2022
	Employ at least 48 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage for the labor force of approximately 725,000 people.	2022
	Conduct worksite inspections, including routine and unannounced inspections and in both the formal and informal sectors, to identify child labor violations.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors are not tasked with conciliation or arbitration duties so that they can carry out their primary duties of inspection and monitoring throughout the country.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections and criminal investigations into alleged child labor crimes and publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement bodies, including the courts, have sufficient resources to investigate, prosecute, and impose penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2022
	Ensure that the National Observatory of the Rights of the Child remains active and functions as a coordinating mechanism to address all forms of child labor and report on its activities.	2013 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, including forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.	2015 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into policies that aim to address child labor.	2014 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that children have access to education by eliminating school fees, increasing the number of teachers and schools in rural areas, and expanding efforts to provide all children with birth registration.	2010 – 2022
	Expand programs to address the scope of the country's child labor problem, including in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that the government continues to provide adequate support to survivors of child labor, including sufficient shelter space for survivors.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, The Gambia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Nigeria to coordinate efforts to address the trafficking of women and children.



It also provided information regarding

its criminal law enforcement activities during the reporting period. In addition, the government launched four centers to provide services to survivors of gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, including child victims. However, children in The Gambia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced begging. Gaps in the law remain, including that the minimum age for work of 18 years old is higher than the compulsory education age of 16 years old. The Gambia also lacked resources to conduct adequate enforcement efforts and has insufficient social programs to address child labor.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in The Gambia. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	22.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	78.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	21.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		85.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including protecting crops against animals (3,4)
Industry	Working in carpentry, masonry, sewing, plumbing, and in metal welding workshops† (3,4) Sand mining† (5)
Services	Domestic work (3,6) Street work, including begging and vending (3,6-8) Scavenging for scrap metal at dump sites, markets, garages, and car parks (4,6,9) Working as attendants for commercial vehicles in the transportation sector (3,8) Working as auto mechanics† (3,4,6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,10-12) Forced begging by Koranic teachers (3,4,11) Forced labor in domestic work, farming, and street vending (4,11)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In The Gambia, children are exploited in human trafficking and subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, as well as forced labor in domestic work, farming, and street vending. (11,12) Research suggests that before the COVID-19 pandemic, foreign nationals subjected children to commercial sexual exploitation in the Tourism Development Area, which consists of the areas around major beaches, hotels, and nightclubs. (4,11,13-16) The

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impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry reduced the prevalence of child exploitation in the tourism sector in 2020 and 2021—a trend which reportedly continued during the reporting period. (4,17) In The Gambia, it is common practice to send boys to receive education from Koranic teachers, or *marabouts*, who sometimes force students to engage in begging, street vending, and agricultural work. (3,12,14,18) In addition, children work in sand mines on the coast, shoveling white sand into trucks for use in the construction industry. (16)

The Constitution and Gambian law mandate free compulsory primary and lower-secondary education. Families, however, are often responsible for supplies and uniforms, exam fees, and contributions to school funds. (6,18,19) In addition, inadequate classroom infrastructure, low numbers of teachers in rural areas, lack of transportation, and limited access to clean water and toilets in schools create barriers for children to access education, increasing their vulnerability to child labor and exploitation. (3,4,6,18,20-22) Children with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing education, including the absence of special education programs outside of urban centers. (4,18,23)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Gambia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in The Gambia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including that the age up to which children are required to attend school is below the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 45 of the Labor Act (24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 44 of the Children's Act; Articles 46 and 48 of the Labor Act (25,24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 42, 44, and 45 of the Children's Act (25)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 20 of the Constitution; Articles 2, 39–41, 47, and 58 of the Children's Act; Articles 2 and 28 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (19,25,26)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 30, and 39 of the Children's Act; Articles 2, 28, 29, 38(c), and 56 of the Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 13 of the Tourism Offenses Act (25,26,27)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 26, 27, 29–32, and 34 of the Children's Act; Articles 7–9 of the Tourism Offenses Act (25,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 31 and 37 of the Children's Act (25)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 59 of the Children's Act (25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 59 of the Children's Act (25)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 31(c) of the Children's Act (25)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16‡	Article 18 of the Children's Act (25)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 30 of the Constitution; Article 18 of the Children's Act (19,25)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (28,29)

The Gambia permits children as young as 16 to engage in light work, and children as young as 12 to work as a child apprentice in the informal sector. While the Children's Act generally prohibits children from working in conditions that would be harmful to their health, education, or development, the Act does not determine the activities in which light work or apprenticeships may be permitted, prescribe the number of hours per week for light work or apprenticeships, or specify the conditions in which light work or apprenticeships may be undertaken. (25) The Children's Act provides for compulsory basic education. However, the law does not explicitly specify at what age basic education begins or how many years basic education lasts. (25) In addition, while children in The Gambia are required to attend school up to age 16 based on current policy, this standard makes children ages 16 through 18 vulnerable to child labor, as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. (25)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor	Receives complaints about child labor. Conducts labor inspections in the formal sector, mediates disputes between employers and labor representatives, and refers serious cases to the labor courts and the Industrial Tribunal. (4) Housed under the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Regional Integration and Employment. (3,15) Research found that the Department of Labor was unable to fulfill its mandate during the reporting period due to funding shortfalls. (5)
Children's Court	Adjudicates criminal, civil, and care and protection cases involving children. Coordinates with social welfare officers from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) for the referral and care of children. (4,25,30) Research did not find information on whether the Children's Court took actions to address child labor during the reporting period.
National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP)	Investigates suspected cases of human trafficking, provides support to survivors, coordinates efforts across government agencies, and maintains a database on trafficking cases. (31) Carries out awareness-raising activities and coordinates training for law enforcement officials. Oversees the National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants, including Victims of Trafficking in The Gambia. (32,33) Receives reports of child abuse complaints from The Gambia Police Force Child Welfare Unit, which has trained child welfare officers at all major police stations. (16,20,21,34) While NAATIP received more funding than in previous years, its resources were not adequate to fulfill its mandate, leaving it dependent on support from international partners. (31)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in The Gambia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of funding.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$15,576 (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	4 (4)	4 (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (4)	31 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	5 (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (4)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (4)	N/A (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	No (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	No (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (31)

In 2022, the government provided child labor training to the inspectorate's dedicated child labor inspector. (6,31) Although the number of child labor violations is unknown for the reporting period, reports state that three children were removed from worksites as a result of child labor inspections, two of whom received support from social services. (5) However, research indicates that The Gambia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties, a problem exacerbated by reported insufficient funding of the labor inspectorate. The government funded only inspectors' salaries but did not provide funding for the inspectorate at large in 2022, preventing inspectors from traveling to worksites and conducting inspections in regions and sectors in which child labor is known to occur. (4,6,35,36) In addition, previous reports state that inspectors do not inspect private homes or farms in which children may work, despite being legally permitted to do so. (20,21,24)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in The Gambia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including lack of training covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (4)	Unknown (6,31)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (4)	5 (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	0 (6)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	0 (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (4)	No (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (33)

In cooperation with the UNODC, the government convened a training on trafficking in persons for 30 law enforcement officials in May and a second training for 30 border control officers in October. (31) In cooperation with the IOM, the government also convened a training on trafficking in persons in September for 35 tourism security officers, and a separate training in November for 26 judicial officials on prosecuting trafficking cases using a survivor-centered approach. (31) Although investigators received training on trafficking in persons, they did not receive training on all other worst forms of child labor during the reporting period. (6) In 2022, the government reported investigating five new cases of child labor involving forced labor, trafficking in persons, commercial sexual exploitation, and other illicit activity. (6) The government also allocated a fully furnished

office complex and a vehicle to support law enforcement efforts to prevent and address human trafficking. (31) Previous research indicates that penalties are not fully applied to criminal cases involving the worst forms of child labor, which can hinder criminal law enforcement efforts. (13,25,37,38)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of information on steps taken by the government coordination mechanism to address child labor during the reporting year.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Coordination Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates child labor enforcement processes, including prosecutions of the worst forms of child labor. Led by DSW and supported by UNICEF, comprises representatives from Department of Labor, UNICEF, DSW, NAATIP, Action Aid, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Gambia Teachers Union, Young People in the Media, and the Inspector General of Police. (3) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active in 2022.

The National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) chairs The National Task Force on Trafficking in Persons, which is intended to regularly assess progress and provide recommendations for combating trafficking in persons. The Task Force met four times in the reporting period, most recently in November 2022. (31)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of implementation of some policies related to child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2021–2025)	Directs governmental efforts to address human trafficking. Includes strategies to improve legal framework, training of law enforcement and social services, prevention and awareness, and protection for human trafficking survivors. (39) In 2022, the government allocated a monthly budget to carry out activities in support of the National Action Plan, including awareness raising, capacity development and training, and community outreach. (31)
Regional Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)	Includes MOUs with both Senegal and Nigeria to coordinate efforts to address human trafficking. The MOU with Senegal commits both countries to information sharing; improved anti-trafficking in persons laws; and prevention, protection, and assistance activities. (4) During the reporting period, The Gambia signed the MOU with Nigeria, which included commitments to coordinate on prosecution, share information, coordinate identification and protection, and facilitate the safe return of human trafficking survivors to their country of origin. (31,40)
Code of Conduct of The Gambia Tourism Authority for the Protection of Children	Raises awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry and among tourists. (16,41) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Code of Conduct of The Gambia Tourism Authority for the Protection of Children during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (21,28)

During the reporting period, the Child Labor Office of the Department of Labor, with funding from UNICEF, drafted a national Child Labor Policy, which will be the government's primary instrument in eliminating child labor in the country. (6) The government also approved Ethical Recruitment Policy Guidelines, a Pre-Departure Training Manual, and a Labor Migration Strategy to protect Gambian labor migrants, many of whom are children, from exploitation and unfair treatment in 2022. (31,42) Research was unable to locate copies of these documents.

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to fully address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
DSW Child Welfare Drop-in Centers†	Drop-in centers run by DSW with support from international organizations, foreign NGOs, and local businesses. Provide care, educational support, and counseling to child trafficking survivors, children removed from forced labor, street children, and children exploited by Koranic schools for forced begging. (4,16,20) Research was unable to determine whether the drop-in centers were operational during the reporting period.
Conditional Cash Transfers to Islamic Religious Schools (<i>Majaalis</i>)†	Ministry of Education program in partnership with the Institute for Social Reformation, an Islamic NGO based in The Gambia, that gives Koranic schools approximately \$2 monthly for each student if Koranic teachers do not force students to beg. (4,15,21) Provides curriculum standards to Islamic schools. (4,43) Each month, a joint team of ministry officials and Institute for Social Reformation and Action representatives travels to each Koranic school participating in the program. (4) Research was unable to determine whether the program was in operation during the reporting period.
Government-Run Shelters and "One-Stop" Centers†*	Includes DSW-run shelter, which has a 50-person capacity, supports vulnerable persons including trafficking survivors and children at risk of trafficking. (31) In 2022, the government launched four "one-stop" centers to provide services, including legal aid, shelter, health care, referral assistance, and psychological services to survivors of gender-based violence and trafficking in persons. (31)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of The Gambia.

Child trafficking survivors may receive care from the government-run drop-in centers, privately operated institutions, or in their own residence as appropriate, and still receive government-provided resources regardless of the chosen option. (32,44) Although The Gambia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. Programs do not reach all children working in agriculture and domestic work or those vulnerable to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and street work. (4,21)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in The Gambia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's light work and child apprenticeship provisions specify the activities and conditions in which work may be undertaken, and prescribe the number of hours per week such work may be undertaken.	2017 – 2022
	Increase the compulsory education age from 16 years old to 18 years old to align with the minimum age for work.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that agencies responsible for labor law and criminal law enforcement—including the Department of Labor, the Children's Court, and the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons—are adequately funded by the government and able to fulfill their mandates.	2018 – 2022
	Publish information on labor inspectorate funding and the number of child labor violations found on an annual basis.	2021 – 2022
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating routine inspections rather than performing inspections solely based on complaints received and ensure these inspections target sectors prone to the use of child labor.	2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 4 to 24 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is fully funded and has the resources and capabilities to conduct inspections in all sectors, including at private homes and farms.	2017 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officers receive training related to child labor and ensure training covers all worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, and the use of children in illicit activity.	2022
	Ensure that criminal penalties for the worst forms of child labor are consistently applied to deter violations.	2016 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Coordination Committee on Child Labor is active and able to carry out its intended mandate of coordinating child labor enforcement processes, including prosecutions of the worst forms of child labor.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement the Code of Conduct of The Gambia Tourism Authority for the Protection of Children and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2022
	Adopt, implement, and publish the National Child Labor Policy and ensure it addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Provide public copies of policies addressing child labor, including the Ethical Recruitment Policy Guidelines, Pre-Departure Training Manual, and the Labor Migration Strategy.	2022
Social Programs	Ensure that children can complete compulsory schooling by subsidizing or defraying the cost of supplies, uniforms, transportation, and other fees.	2010 – 2022
	Enhance opportunities for children to access education by providing adequate classroom facilities, clean water, and sanitation; ensuring accessibility for students with disabilities; and increasing the number of teachers in rural areas.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key social programs, including the Child Welfare Drop-In Centers and the Conditional Cash Transfer Program, and publish results of activities implemented during the reporting period.	2022
	Expand existing social programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, including all worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, Georgia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Labor Inspectorate created a group of expert labor inspectors to identify instances of forced labor and trafficking for labor exploitation and opened branch offices in Batumi and Kutaisi to increase its operational presence in Western Georgia. The Prosecutor's Office adopted a new strategy for 2022–2027 to increase efforts to identify and effectively prosecute child trafficking and labor exploitation by using a victim-centered approach. In addition, the government approved a new National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights in Georgia for 2022–2030, with a focus on protection of the rights of certain vulnerable groups, including children. However, children in Georgia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced begging. Children also engage in agricultural labor. Georgia's minimum age for work does not meet international standards because it does not apply to children working in the informal sector. The Criminal Code does not explicitly prohibit the use of children in illicit activities. Furthermore, lack of effective coordination between the entities involved in addressing human trafficking hinders efforts to adequately assist child victims.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Georgia.

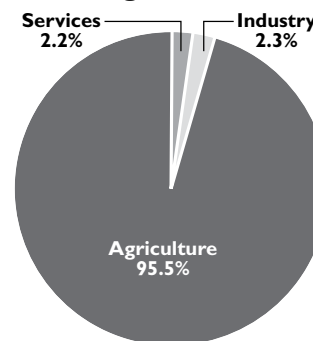
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	2.9 (13,547)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	96.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	3.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		90.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Child Labor Survey (NCLS), 2015. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming of potatoes, citrus, blueberries, tea, hazelnuts, and hay (3-9)
	Raising cattle, activities unknown (7,9)
Industry	Construction (7,8,10)
	Work in factories (7)
Services	Street work, including begging, vending, car washing, carrying cargo, and collecting scrap metal (3-5,7,8,11-14)
	Domestic work (7,8)
	Work in hospitality (restaurants, hotels, and at beaches and resorts), wholesale and retail, small advertising services, and food delivery services (3,7,8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (13,15,16)
	Forced begging and street vending (3-5,13-16)
	Coerced criminality, such as theft (3,16)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Estimates suggest that 1,000 to 2,000 children earn a living by begging in Georgia, primarily caused by poverty, homelessness, or domestic violence. (3,5,7,8,12,14) Many child beggars are from Roma communities. (11,13) Children also engage in seasonal labor migration, both within Georgia and to Türkiye, where children as young as age 13 work during the summers to harvest tea and hazelnuts, as well as in construction. (7,8) In the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are occupied by Russian forces and not under control of the central government, lack of information limits an assessment of the types of work children perform and the sectors in which they work. (4,5,16,17)




Roma and Azerbaijani Kurd ethnic minorities and refugee and internally displaced children from Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova are subjected to forced begging and coerced into criminality in Georgia. (12-16) There are instances in which Georgia is a source and transit country for child trafficking, especially of girls being taken to Cyprus, Egypt, Türkiye, and the United Arab Emirates for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. (12-16) According to the IOM, child sexual exploitation is also an issue within Georgia. (8) Limited evidence indicates children may perform hazardous activities in construction. (10)

Children who do not attend school in Georgia are vulnerable to child labor. Some children systematically miss or drop out of school due to their involvement in seasonal work, household labor, or seasonal labor migration. (3,7) School employees, such as teachers and administrative personnel, do not always record absenteeism by students or the reasons for it. As a result, many cases of potential child labor are not recorded or investigated. (3,7,18) Migrant children and some Roma children may not attend school due to language barriers; however, there are some mixed language schools with Georgian, Russian, and Azeri or Armenian languages. (3,18,19) Socially vulnerable children, children from impoverished families, children with disabilities, Roma children, those who live in rural areas, and asylum-seeking and refugee children may have difficulty accessing education. This is in part due to a lack of identity documents, which help children access state-funded services, including social, medical, and educational programs. (4,8,20-22) UNICEF notes that some migrant and Roma families continue to destroy identification and other documents in an effort to avoid interaction with state officials. (9,12)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Georgia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Georgia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections in the informal sector.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Article 4 of the Labor Code of Georgia (23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 4 of the Labor Code of Georgia; Articles 2 and 5 of the Law on Occupational Safety (23,24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 4(4) of the Labor Code of Georgia; Articles 2 and 5 of the Law on Occupational Safety; Resolution 381 Approving the List of Dangerous, Heavy, Harmful, and Hazardous Works (23-25)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 30 of the Constitution of Georgia; Articles 143/1, 143/2, and 143/3 of the Criminal Code of Georgia; Law of Georgia on Combating Human Trafficking; Article 55 of the Code on the Rights of the Child (26-29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 143/1, 143/2, 143/3, and 172 of the Criminal Code of Georgia; Law of Georgia on Combating Human Trafficking (27,28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 143/1, 143/2, 143/3, 253–255, 255/1, and 255/2 of the Criminal Code of Georgia; Article 56 of the Code on the Rights of the Child (28,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 171 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (28)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 10 of the Law of Georgia on Military Duty and Military Service (30)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 9 and 21 of the Law of Georgia on Military Duty and Military Service (30)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 410 of the Criminal Code of Georgia; Article 59 of the Code on the Rights of the Child (28,29)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 2 and 9 of the Law of Georgia on General Education (31)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 22 of the Law of Georgia on General Education (31)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (31)

No legislative changes were introduced during the reporting period. (8)

Labor Code provisions related to the minimum age for work are not in compliance with international standards because they do not apply to the informal sector. (23) In Georgia, some employers hire children informally specifically because they are not covered by the Labor Code. (7) Georgia's law on education allows children to leave school at age 15. (31) These children are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor because they are no longer required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work full time until they are 16 years old. Article 4 of the Labor Code specifies conditions under which children ages 14 and 15 may perform light work, and Article 14 prescribes the number of hours that may be worked, but the law does not specify the activities in which light work is permissible. (23) Article 4 of the Labor Code stipulates that children under age 14 are allowed to work only in sport, art, and culture, as well as some advertising activities. (23) Lastly, Georgia's laws do not criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including the use, procuring, or offering of children for the production or trafficking of drugs. (28)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Affairs (MoLHSA)	The Labor Inspectorate under MoLHSA operates as a semi-autonomous legal entity of public law. (8,9) The Labor Inspectorate enforces labor laws related to forced labor, labor exploitation, and occupational safety and health norms through routine targeted and unannounced inspections. (8) Labor inspectors may inspect any facility or economic activity, including private farms and private residential houses where economic activity takes place. In 2022, labor inspectors went through 24 intensive short-term and long-term professional and technical trainings, to include occupational safety and health topics, labor rights, and child labor. (8) The Labor Inspectorate created a group of specialized labor inspectors to identify instances of forced labor and trafficking for labor exploitation, and opened branch offices in Batumi and Kutaisi to increase its operational presence in Western Georgia. (32) Additionally, 37 inspectors completed a training course on forced labor and labor exploitation organized by the Ministry of Justice, Labor Inspectorate, and the IOM, with the financial support of the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the U.S. Department of State. (8,33) Throughout the year, the Labor Inspectorate conducted outreach to employers and the general population to share information on child labor and forced labor, with focus on the border regions with Türkiye where, according to reports, children engage in seasonal work in country and in Türkiye. (8) In addition, MoLHSA, through the Department of Labor and Employment Policy, revises laws and policies to be in accordance with international standards. (34) Through the Social Services Agency, administers social benefits such as targeted social assistance, health care, and vouchers for day care, and employs social workers who oversee child protection. (5) Receives complaints through the Child Protection and Social Programs sub-department and refers complaints of child labor violations to law enforcement agencies for investigation. (34) Operates a hotline in eight languages (Georgian, English, Russian, Turkish, Azeri, Armenian, Arabic, and Persian). (32)
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA)	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking. (3,4) Through the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department, ensures prompt responses to human trafficking crimes, and suggests recommendations for investigations and for legislation implementation. (8) Identifies human traffickers and collates data on traffickers across various agencies through the Information-Analytical Department. (35) Within MoIA, the Central Criminal Police Department leads criminal investigations of human trafficking, including the trafficking of children, through the Division for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration. Operates a hotline that is available in Georgian, Russian, and English. (3,4,32,35) Mobile task force units within MoIA, dedicated to anti-trafficking activities, proactively interview individuals in vulnerable occupations and demographics, including hospitality workers and children living and working on the streets, to identify possible cases of labor exploitation and to advise them of their legal rights and available government services. (3,32,36) MoIA's National Police Academy is the primary institution responsible for training law enforcement officials on organized crime and trafficking, including referral procedures for child protection. (8) In 2022, MoIA launched child trafficking investigations of 15 cases of unlawful adoption of minors dating back to the 1980s. (8,37) In addition to initial trainings, 10 employees of the Division for Combating Human Trafficking participated in 10 trainings on the topic of transnational crime and human trafficking, to include child exploitation. Two investigators of the Police Department of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara (Adjara Police Department) of MoIA received trainings on child labor. (8)
Prosecutor's Office of Georgia (POG)	An independent entity, separate from the Ministry of Justice, which prosecutes criminal cases involving child exploitation, forced labor, and human trafficking. (15,38) Manages an interagency working group on child labor trafficking issues under the framework of the POG operational strategy. The working group was active during the reporting period. (3,32) In 2022, the POG adopted a new Strategy for 2022–2027, to include a child victim-centered approach and to increase efforts to identify and effectively prosecute child trafficking and labor exploitation. (8,39)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Georgia appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,927,900 (3)	\$2,041,903 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	109 (3)	123 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (40)	Yes (40)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	58,607 (3)	845 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (3)	15 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (3)	15 (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (3)	15 (8)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (40)	Yes (40)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (8)

During the reporting period, the Labor Inspectorate increased its staffing to 123 labor inspectors. Research indicates that Georgia has an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (8,41) There are two inspectors specifically assigned to monitor forced labor and child labor issues, but all inspectors are trained on six technical and general topics and provided with continuing education to have the skills required to detect and respond to child labor. (3,8)

The number of inspections decreased significantly during the reporting period; however, all inspections in 2022 were conducted on occupational safety and health issues and labor code violations, including child labor, compared to inspections conducted in 2021 that mostly focused on pandemic-related regulations. In 2022, out of 845 inspections conducted in different economic sectors, including agriculture, 830 were scheduled and 15 were unannounced. (8) During the reporting period, labor inspectors identified 15 cases of child labor (11 were found during scheduled and 4 during unannounced inspections), in wholesale and retail, accommodations, and food delivery services in the Tbilisi, Adjara, Shida Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Imereti regions. (8,9) All of the companies were fined, and penalties were collected in the amount of \$32,592 (85,300 GEL). (8) The Russia-occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not under the control of Georgian central authorities, who are prevented from carrying out inspections and law enforcement there. (4,14,17)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Georgia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including limited efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict child labor crimes during the reporting period.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	6 (3)	3 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	2 (3)	1 (32)
Number of Convictions	2 (3)	0 (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (3)	No (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (8)

The Georgian government made limited efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict child labor crimes during the reporting period. In 2022, Georgian law enforcement agencies initiated three investigations of child labor exploitation cases (compared to six in 2021); two of those investigations remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period. (8) One case was referred for prosecution and involved child exploitation through forced begging and criminal activities. (32) Criminal investigators were unable to investigate and prosecute any potential human trafficking cases, including of children, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, because they remain occupied by Russian forces and outside of central government control. (4,14,16) In addition, according to the IOM, the Central Criminal Police Department in Tbilisi still has no direct supervision over the team of specialized police investigators in the Adjara region and there are indications that the lack of effective communication between specialized investigators in Tbilisi and Batumi may hinder human trafficking investigations in the Adjara region. (9,32)

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In 2022, 22 employees of the Prosecutor's Office (POG) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) completed a training course on investigating cases of child exploitation and conducting interviews of child victims, organized by the IOM with financial support from the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). In addition, the IOM facilitated discussion for 20 government representatives, including the Ministry of Justice, MoIA, and POG employees, on the main challenges and performance of Georgia's law enforcement entities in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking. (32) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Justice, with financial support from the OSCE and the Swiss Embassy in Georgia, led the first national simulation-based training on human trafficking for 40 investigators, prosecutors, labor inspectors, psychologists, social workers, and staff working with human trafficking victims and survivors. (32)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coordinating mechanism with sufficient scope to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interagency Anti-Trafficking Coordination Council for the Implementation of Measures Against Human Trafficking (A-TIP Council)	Coordinates government efforts against human trafficking, including efforts to protect and rehabilitate survivors. (15) Drafts national action plans and other strategic government programs to address human trafficking, and publishes biannual statistics on human trafficking, including sexual and labor exploitation of minors. Refers child survivors to shelters to receive social services. (3,4) Chaired by the Minister of Justice and comprises representatives from state agencies and non-state entities. (11,15) In December 2022, adopted a new National Action Plan (NAP) for 2023–2024 and issued a report on the implementation of the previous NAP for 2021–2022. (8,32,42) In addition, it adopted and submitted for the government's approval a Governmental Strategy on Protection of Homeless Children from Violence, including Trafficking in Persons (2023–2026). (8,32) The A-TIP Council published information and statistics on anti-trafficking efforts on the Ministry of Justice's website; however, observers continued to report the A-TIP Council did not provide regular public assessments of government efforts and, as a result, appeared to lack transparency. (9,16)

In December 2022, the Interagency Human Rights Council, in collaboration with the ILO, released an online training course, "Business, human rights, and decent work in Georgia," that included topics on elimination of child labor. (8,45,46) In addition, the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Affairs (MoLHSA)'s Labor Inspectorate and MoIA signed a Memorandum of Cooperation that allows carrying out joint inspections to counter trafficking of minors and to continue to identify children working on the street. (8) However, lack of effective coordination between the three entities involved in addressing human trafficking—the MoIA's Human Rights Department and victim assistance coordinators, the POG with its witness and victim assistance coordinators, and the Agency for State Care—may hinder efforts to assist child victims. (3,9)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the insufficient scope of existing policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (2021–2022)	Aimed to prevent human trafficking with improved detection mechanisms and effective criminal prosecution; promoted reintegration of victims, including child victims, into society; and improved interagency coordination in the fight against trafficking. (8)
Code on the Rights of the Child	Seeks to establish and implement a range of measures to protect children from violence and hazardous child labor. (4,5,29) In 2022, the Permanent Parliamentary Council for the Protection of Children's Rights, responsible for monitoring the Code's implementation, conducted an assessment of seven primary areas of the Code's Action Plan, including the deinstitutionalization process, alternative care systems, preventive and family support programs, child poverty, protection of children from violence, assessment of children's disabilities, and reform of the status-granting system. (8,47) Throughout the year, 10 municipalities either established or amended programs for protection and support of children's rights. (8)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (21,48)

In September 2022, the government adopted and submitted for Parliament’s approval the new National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights in Georgia for 2022–2030. While the new strategy does not address all fundamental human rights and freedoms, it does put a special emphasis on the protection of the rights of certain vulnerable groups, including children. (8,49) The government drafted and submitted for adoption the Governmental Strategy on Protection of Homeless Children from Violence, including Trafficking in Persons 2023–2026, which covers child labor issues. (8) Although the government has established policies to address child begging, child trafficking, child labor in street work, and hazardous child labor, it does not have a policy to address child labor in agriculture or other forms of informal work.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the country’s child labor problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Programs Administered by the Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking†	MoLHSA legal public entity that provides care and administers social benefits, including targeted social assistance for survivors of child labor, human trafficking, domestic abuse, and sexual violence, as well as for elderly, disabled, and orphan populations. (3,4) Operates six shelters and seven crisis centers for children living and working on the street. (8,14) Implements the government’s Rehabilitation and Reintegration Strategy, which includes operating shelters for survivors of human trafficking. (21) Operates eight mobile groups to identify street children. In addition, operates a hotline for potential victims of human trafficking with assistance available in eight languages. (32) The hotline provides both over-the-phone and in-person psychological support and counseling services for children and parents. (3) Continued to implement the Social Rehabilitation and Childcare program with an increased budget of \$19.3 million (52.1 million GEL), up from \$12.82 million (40.0 million GEL) in 2021. The program identifies and provides psychosocial rehabilitation and integration assistance to homeless children at high risk of abandonment or separation and provides placement of abandoned children into foster care, guardianship, or small group homes. (8) During the reporting period, assisted 296 street children, 151 of whom were directed to crisis centers and 67 of whom were directed to 24-hour shelters under MoLHSA management in four cities: Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, and Batumi. (8,9)
Programs Overseen by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport (MoES)‡	MoES oversees national primary education curriculum and vocational training programs. (4) Funds programs that promote the inclusion of vulnerable children in education. (4,21) Initiatives include a program designed to increase the participation in school by street children, children forced into begging, and children who are seasonal agricultural workers; and a program to distribute free textbooks to public school students. (8,21) Conducts anti-trafficking activities in elementary schools, high schools, and institutions of higher education. (13) Addresses the educational needs of vulnerable children by funding education for children living in MoLHSA shelters, vocational programs, and a program to increase the number of Georgian language teachers in communities with a high number of ethnic minorities. (3) In 2022, the government approved a new Unified Strategy of Education and Science 2022–2030, aiming to ensure equal access to education for all children, including children with disabilities, minorities, and marginalized children, as well as those who are at risk of dropping out. (49,50)
Targeted Social Assistance Program and Child Benefit Program†	Social Services Agency-administered social assistance programs designed to eliminate poverty, especially child poverty. Provides a variety of services, including support for impoverished families, and daycare for vulnerable children. (3) In 2022, increased child monthly benefits from \$37 to \$56 (from 100 GEL to 150 GEL). (51)

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Georgia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4,8,11,21)

During the reporting period, the government continued to provide identification documents to street children to enable them to access healthcare, education, social and other state programs; however, government outreach remains insufficient to address the issue. (21,49,52) In 2022, the government conducted public awareness campaigns throughout Georgia to raise awareness of child labor and trafficking of minors. (8) In addition, the Public Defender of Georgia, with the support of UNICEF, published a Child Rights Impact Assessment of COVID-19 Related State Measures, including the impact on children living and working on the streets, and specific recommendations to other government agencies. (53) Although Georgia has programs that target child

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labor, including ones to address the problem of street children, their scope does not fully address the extent of the problem, sometimes due to limited resources at the local level. (4,7,8,54) Furthermore, according to the Public Defender, the number of shelters, day care centers, and specialists working with homeless children in the country remain insufficient and there are no additional rehabilitation and resocialization services or mechanisms to prevent these children from returning to the street. (8)

Additionally, the government adopted a simplified school enrollment procedure and opened classrooms in the Ukrainian language for Ukrainian refugee children. (17,55,56) Despite the government's efforts to implement an inclusive education system, the Public Defender of Georgia noted that educational access remains inadequate for vulnerable children, including students with disabilities, street children, and children in state care. (4,57)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Georgia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those in informal work.	2017 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age from 15 to 16 to be consistent with the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific, including the list of activities in which light work is permissible for 15-year-old children, to prevent them from involvement in child labor.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of children for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Impose penalties for convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2022
	Continue to increase communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs' specialized investigators across the country, including with investigators from Adjara region, to ensure coordinated human trafficking investigations.	2022
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to prevent and eliminate all worst forms of child labor.	2022
	Increase coordination between the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor's Office, the Agency for State Care, and other government agencies.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant forms of child labor, including child labor in agriculture and other forms of informal work.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in agriculture, to inform policies and programs.	2018 – 2022
	Make additional efforts to register all children in school, including those from Roma communities, provide them with identity documents, and ensure that these groups can access education.	2018 – 2022
	Improve access to education for children who speak languages other than Georgian or Russian, as well as for socially vulnerable children, children from impoverished families, children with disabilities, and children who live in rural areas.	2019 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, especially for street children, and increase resources available at the local level.	2018 – 2022

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In 2022, Ghana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government significantly increased the number of labor inspectors from 48 to 189 and labor inspections from 749 to 1,108. The government also supported the Alliance on Sustainable Cocoa, which works to improve the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of cocoa production and trade, including by addressing child labor. In addition, it improved its data sharing efforts with non-governmental organizations and other countries by providing timely responses to requests for information. However, children in Ghana are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in fishing and cocoa production. Prohibitions related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards because protections do not extend to live performances. Ghana also does not prohibit the use of children for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, the government has not acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Lastly, resource constraints severely limited the government's ability to adequately enforce labor laws and implement social programs.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ghana.

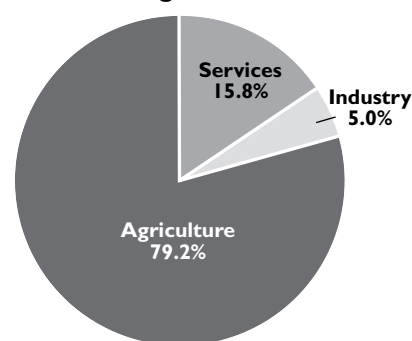
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	13.0 (927,591)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	89.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	13.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		93.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS), 2016–2017. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Producing cocoa, including land clearing, using machetes and cutlasses for weeding, breaking cocoa pods, collecting cocoa pods with a harvesting hook, exposure to pesticides,† and carrying heavy loads† of water (2-9)
	Production of rice, palm oil and cotton, including weeding, and harvesting (10)
	Herding livestock, including cattle, hunting, and work in slaughterhouses (9)
Industry	Fishing, including for tilapia; preparing bait, nets, and fishing gear; launching, paddling, and draining canoes; diving for fish; casting and pulling fishing nets and untangling them underwater; sorting, picking, cleaning, smoking, transporting, and selling fish; cleaning and repairing nets; and building and repairing boats (3-5,9-13)
	Quarrying† and small-scale mining,† sometimes for gold, including the use of mercury,† digging in deep pits, crushing rocks by hand, carrying heavy loads,† and operating machinery† (5,7,9,11)
	Textiles, Manufacturing† (7,8)
	Construction and carrying heavy loads (3,7-9)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work (4,5,9)
	Transporting heavy loads as <i>kayayeri</i> † (5,9,14,15)
	Work in transportation† (8)
	Street work,† including begging, (5,7,9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5,9,16-18)
	Forced labor in begging; agriculture, including cocoa; herding; fishing; artisanal gold mining; domestic work; and street work, including vending and carrying heavy loads (3,5,9,17-21)
	Forced ritual servitude for girls known as <i>trokosi</i> , including in domestic work for priests (16,19)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.







NORC at the University of Chicago released a report detailing findings from a sectoral representative survey conducted in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire during the cocoa harvesting season of 2018–2019. This report found an increase in child labor (and hazardous child labor) in cocoa production during the 10-year timeframe since the survey in 2008–2009. (6) A majority of children who are subjected to human trafficking in Ghana are exploited for labor in cocoa production, domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, gold mining, and fishing. Children as young as age 4 are subjected to forced labor in fishing in the areas around Lake Volta, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (5,6,9,19,20,22) In addition, girls as young as age 13 from rural northern regions in Ghana travel to urban centers to work as *kayayeri*, or female porters, carrying heavy loads on their heads in markets, and are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. (5,9,14,15)

According to the Constitution and the Education Act, primary education in Ghana is free from kindergarten through high school, though only compulsory through junior high school, and a birth certificate is not needed for enrollment. (9,23,24) The dual-track system, introduced in 2018, allows secondary school students to attend school in alternating semesters and take advantage of opportunities such as vocational training when they are not in school. (14,25) Although this has significantly increased the overall number of children attending school, reports suggest that opportunities to attend vocational training are often not readily available or affordable. As a result, these children are vulnerable to exploitation in child labor during the times when they are not in school. (2,3,11,16,17,26) In addition, factors such as a shortage of classrooms, administrative fees, expenses for school supplies and uniforms, long distances to schools, the absence of sanitation facilities, overcrowding in urban areas, sexual harassment of girls in schools, physical violence and verbal abuse in schools, and poor educational infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, severely limit access to education for many children. (2,3,5,9,11,19)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Ghana has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Ghana's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of commercial sexual exploitation prohibitions for live performances.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Section 89 and 92 of the Children's Act (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 91 and 92 of the Children's Act (27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 28.1d, 28.2, and 28.5 of the Constitution; Article 7 of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument; Sections 91 and 92 of the Children's Act; Article 58 of the Labor Act (23,27-30)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 16.1 and 16.2 of the Constitution; Articles 116 and 117 of the Labor Act; Sections 1–3 and 42 of the Human Trafficking Act; Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Prohibition Legislative Instrument (23,28,31,32)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Act; Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Prohibition Legislative Instrument; Articles 21–25 of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument (29,31,32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 101A, 107, 108, 110, 111, 274–277, and 279–283 of the Criminal Offenses Act; Article 7(2) of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument; Section 136 of the Electronic Transaction Act; Section 62-66 of the Cybersecurity Act. (29,33-35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Ghana Armed Forces General Eligibility (Recruits) (36)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Ghana Armed Forces General Eligibility (Recruits) (36)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 2.2 of the Education Act (37)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 25.1.a of the Constitution; Articles 1.1, 1.2, and 2.2 of the Education Act (23,37)

* Country has no conscription (36)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (37)

While Ghana does criminally prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of a child for electronic pornographic performances, the law does not extend to live pornographic performances. In addition, although Ghana has prohibited some hazardous work for children, the current hazardous work list does not cover all occupations or activities in which child labor is known to occur, including in cocoa production. (3,29,38,39) Furthermore, Ghana has not established a law that prohibits the use of children for illicit activities.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations (MELR)	Enforces child labor laws. (14) Conducts national dialogue and a workshop on Child Labor-Free Zones to discuss child labor in the cocoa industry. (3)
Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development's District Assemblies	Through labor inspectors, investigates child labor violations, educates employers on compliance with child labor laws, and conducts inspections. (3,9,38) Through social services subcommittees, enforces child labor provisions in the informal sector. (3,27)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of the Interior	Through its Ghana Police Service, investigates, arrests, and prosecutes cases related to the worst forms of child labor, and operates a 24/7 hotline for reporting crimes. (3,9) Within the Ghana Police Service, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit and Anti-Human Trafficking Unit investigate cases and provide support to survivors. (3,40) Through its Ghana Immigration Service, combats human trafficking through Anti-Human Smuggling and Trafficking Units. (3)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Ghana took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (5)	Unknown (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	48 (5)	189 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (28)	No (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	749 (5)	1,108 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (5)	46 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (5)	14 (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (5)	0 (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (9)

While the labor inspectorate is unable to assess fines for child labor violations, they are able to refer violations to the Ghana Police Services who can issue them for violations. (9,28) Research indicates that Ghana does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,5,24,41) Additionally, research also found that inadequate resources, including funding, transportation, office space, and office supplies hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws, particularly in the informal sector in which child labor is most common. (3,4,38) In addition, a formal referral mechanism continued to be hindered by the lack of funding, shelter space, and transportation for survivors. (3,4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Ghana took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal law enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (5)	46 (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	16 (5)	14 (9)
Number of Convictions	3 (5)	13 (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (5)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (9)

During the reporting period, the government organized 6 consultative stakeholder meetings to review and develop the new national plan of action on the worst forms of child labor; developed a communications strategy for the years 2022–2026 on human trafficking issues; and organized 5 capacity building trainings for over 300 government officials on irregular human trafficking migration patterns, definitions of forced and child labor, and capacity training which supported survivors of human trafficking. (42) However, criminal enforcement agencies lack the resources to properly monitor sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are known to occur. (5,6,9,17,19,43)

The Office of the Attorney General is responsible for prosecuting child trafficking violations. However, there was an insufficient number of state attorneys designated to prosecute human trafficking crimes. A majority of cases were handled by the Ghana Police Service's police prosecutors, whose lack of advanced legal training may impede their ability to prosecute complex criminal cases. (24,44,45) Research also indicates that slow communication and challenges in evidence collection between the Ghana Police Service and the Attorney General's office may have further hampered efforts to prosecute cases of child trafficking. (3) The IOM has also developed a Trafficking in Persons Information System to improve case tracking. While several ministries, including the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations; the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection; the Ministry of Justice; and the Ministry of the Interior have committed to using this system, research shows that there was limited use of the Trafficking in Persons Information System during the reporting period. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates government efforts to address the worst forms of child labor, and oversees implementation of the National Plan of Action Phase II on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which includes implementation of the Ghana Child Labor Monitoring System. (3,46) Led by MELR's Child Labor Unit, includes representatives from other ministries, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society. (3,46,47) During the reporting period, the committee met on a regular basis and continued anti-trafficking prevention efforts. (9)

The Inter-Sectoral Standard Operating Procedure for child protection and family welfare provides a harmonized framework of agreed standards, principles, and procedures for all child protection and family welfare stakeholders to understand each other's roles and responsibilities. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, it identifies specific procedures for the use of forms, tools, and guides by social services and other key stakeholders, and it holds stakeholders accountable to each other. (4,5)

During the reporting period, the government improved its data sharing efforts with NGOs and other countries by providing child labor figures, specifically those related to freshwater fishing. The information provided informed NGOs of how to better implement their programs. (9)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a policy to address all worst forms of child labor.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
2010 Declaration of Joint Action to Support the Implementation of the Harkin-Engel Protocol and Its Accompanying Framework of Action	Joint Declaration by the Governments of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and the United States with the International Cocoa and Chocolate Industry. (50,51) Provides resources and coordinates with key stakeholders on efforts to reduce the worst forms of child labor in cocoa-producing areas. (50,51) Ensures that all project efforts implemented under the Declaration and Accompanying Framework align with Ghana's national action plans to promote coherence and sustainability. (50,51) This strategy includes the Cocoa for Good Strategy, a \$500 million investment to make cocoa in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire more sustainable and transparent. In 2022, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, along with EU stakeholders, supported the Alliance on Sustainable Cocoa, which works to improve the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of cocoa production and trade, including by addressing child labor. (52,53)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (40,55)

Two new national action plans to address child labor and human trafficking were developed during the reporting period but have yet to be finalized. (9) As a result, Ghana lacks a policy to address all worst forms of child labor. In addition, research was unable to determine whether the Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework and the Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework for the Cocoa Sector, which was developed in consultation with workers' and employers' organizations to identify hazardous activities that should be prohibited for children, was implemented during the reporting period. (30,39) Moreover, although the government made strides in the implementation of its National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana, research indicates that the government relied heavily on NGOs to implement the mandates of this policy. (17)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate funding and the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Industry-Funded Projects	Projects that aim to increase sustainability in the cocoa sector; improve farmer livelihoods; improve access to education; and address the worst forms of child labor in cocoa-growing areas. Some projects may be in support of the World Cocoa Foundation's CocoaAction (2014–2020) initiative and the spirit of the 2010 Declaration. (56)
Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MOGCSP) Programs‡	Programs that aim to support vulnerable children. Includes: the Program to Assist <i>Kayayei</i> , which provides rehabilitation and reintegration support; the temporary program "Get Off the Street," which aims to remove children from the street and reintegrate them into family and educational settings; the Human Trafficking Fund, which aims to provide financial support to victims; and the conditional cash transfer program, which aims to provide monetary support to poor households with orphans and vulnerable children on the condition that these children attend school. (57-59) During the reporting period, MOGCSP continued their advocacy efforts through TV and radio campaigns on topics related to child labor and human trafficking. (42)
Educational Programs‡	Ministry of Education-funded programs under the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education aim to increase school attendance and enrollment. MOGCSP's Ghana School Feeding Program aims to reduce malnutrition, and improve attendance among students; its Capitation Grant Scheme helps defray the cost of basic education for students in public primary schools; and its Ghana Education Service—Girls' Education Unit places girls' education officers at the regional and district levels, and mobilizes communities to enroll more girls in school. (58,60) During the reporting period, the Ghana School Feeding Program fed 3,448,065 pupils in 10,832 public schools. (61)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Ghana.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (45)

Although the government worked closely with industry, NGOs, and international organizations to implement child labor programs in cocoa production, fishing, and mining, the breadth of these programs remains insufficient to address the full scope of the problem. (5) Research indicates a lack of funding as one of the primary obstacles in implementing programs to address child labor. (3,5,57) In addition, shelters are needed in additional regions and districts for survivors of the worst forms of child labor, as well as more funding and logistics support for rescue operations and survivor protection. (3,17,19,24)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Ghana (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children, including the use of children in live performances.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of children in all illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2015 – 2022
	Update the hazardous work list for children to cover all hazardous types of work outlined in ILO C. 182.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on the amount of funding allocated to the labor inspectorate.	2009 – 2022
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors from 189 to 969 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2010 – 2022
	Strengthen and fully fund the mechanism to track cases of child labor for referral between law enforcement and social services providers.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators have adequate resources, including office space, transportation, and supplies, to adequately carry out their mandates throughout the country.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that prosecutors who have received sufficient legal training oversee and lead the prosecution of cases involving the worst forms of child labor; that an adequate number of state attorneys are available to prosecute cases, and that these cases are prosecuted according to the law.	2015 – 2022
	Improve communication and coordination among criminal enforcement agencies to prosecute cases of the worst forms of child labor and provide adequate victim support.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the Trafficking in Persons Information System is used and publish any related activities.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal enforcement agencies have the resources to properly monitor sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are known to occur.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2013 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement government policies and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis related to child labor.	2013 – 2022
	Finalize National Action Plans to address child labor and human trafficking.	2022
	Provide necessary resources for the government to implement the mandates of its national policy.	2022
Social Programs	Improve access to education by eliminating school-related fees, increasing the number of classrooms, improving access to schools, providing sanitation facilities, and prohibiting sexual harassment and physical violence in schools.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that opportunities such as vocational training are available to secondary school students enrolled in the dual-track system.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that social programs are active and receive sufficient funding to carry out their objectives.	2014 – 2022
	Expand the availability of government-supported shelter services for child survivors and ensure that all shelters are operational.	2016 – 2022
	Replicate and expand effective models for addressing exploitative child labor in the cocoa, fishing, and mining sectors.	2009 – 2022

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Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in Grenada, in 2022, the government made no advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The government's ability to prevent children from being subjected to the worst forms of child labor is limited because existing laws require the use of force, threats, abuse of power, or other forms of coercion, and therefore do not comprehensively prohibit child trafficking. Grenada has also not identified activities prohibited for children or criminally prohibited the use, procuring, or offering of a child for all forms of commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, the government has not published data on labor inspectorate funding.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Grenada. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		123.0




Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

Research found no evidence that child labor exists in Grenada.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Grenada has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 2).

Table 2. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 3). However, gaps exist in Grenada's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for hazardous work.

Grenada

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Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 32 and 35 of the Employment Act (3)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 40 of the Employment Act (3)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 25 of the Employment Act; Article 4 of the Constitution; Articles 2 and 9–12 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (3-5)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 2, 9–11, and 14 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (5)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 137(29) and 188 of the Criminal Code; Articles 2 and 12 of the Electronic Crimes Bill; Articles 2 and 10 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (5-8)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 22 and 23 of the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act (9)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 2 and 15 of the Education Act (10)
Free Public Education	No		Article 16 of the Education Act (10)

† Country has no standing military (11)

The government has not identified by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children; however, night work is prohibited for those under age 18. (3) Although Grenada's Employment Act and Education Act allow holiday employment for children over 14 years of age, this does not meet international standards as it does not determine the activities for which light work may be permitted or limit the number of hours for light work. (3,10) Despite establishing heightened penalties for traffickers of children, the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act does not sufficiently prohibit the trafficking of children because it requires the use of force, threats, abuse of power, or other forms of coercion to classify an act as human trafficking. (5) The Criminal Code, Electronic Crimes Bill, and Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act also do not criminally prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of a child for all forms of commercial sexual exploitation. (5,7) Moreover, laws providing for free basic education do not meet international standards because they permit schools to charge tuition fees for some students who reside in Grenada but are not citizens. (10)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor	Enforces laws related to child labor through its Labor Commission, which generates a list of workplaces to inspect. (12) Inspections are conducted at random as well as based on complaints, and unannounced inspections can be conducted in any sector, including the private sector and on farms. (12) Although labor inspectors are not authorized to assess penalties, they inform the Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF) if a child labor violation is found. The RGPF then conducts a criminal investigation, and charges can be laid against violators through the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). (12,13)

Table 4. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF)	Investigates crimes and enforces laws related to child labor. If child labor is confirmed, the RGPF is notified and works with the Child Protection Authority and Ministry of Social Development, Housing & Community Empowerment to have the child removed from the home, if needed. (14) Upon finding sufficient evidence of a criminal violation, submits findings for possible prosecution by the DPP. Helps the Child Protection Authority and the Ministry of Social Development, Housing & Community Empowerment provide emergency services to children. (15)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)	Represents the State of Grenada and is responsible for prosecuting criminal cases in lower and high courts. Authorized to institute, overtake, or discontinue criminal prosecutions. (12) Functions independently, with overarching oversight of all public prosecutions. (12)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Grenada took actions to address child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource and human resource allocation.

Table 5. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (15)	Unknown (12)
Number of Labor Inspectors	5 (15)	4 (12)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (3)	Yes (3)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A (15)	No (12)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	54 (15)	45 (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (15)	0 (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (15)	N/A (12)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (15)	N/A (12)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (15)	Yes (12)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (15)	Yes (12)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (3)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (15)	Yes (12)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (15)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (12)

While research indicates that the budget for the Ministry of Labor is estimated to have decreased from the previous year, the amount allocated to the labor inspectorate is unknown. (12) The government directly employed four labor inspectors to enforce labor laws, a decrease for the second year in a row. (12,13,15) Labor inspectors also did not receive training during the reporting period on laws and enforcement of laws related to child labor. (12) There were no child labor-specific inspections conducted as there is no evidence of child labor in Grenada. However, site visits were conducted in the construction, business services, manufacturing, agriculture, public service, telecommunications, and hospitality and tourism sectors. (12)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Grenada took actions to address child labor. (Table 6).

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Table 6. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (15)	Yes (12)
Number of Investigations	0 (15)	0 (12)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	N/A (15)	N/A (12)
Number of Convictions	N/A (15)	N/A (12)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (15)	N/A (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (12)

The government releases annual reports on its criminal law enforcement efforts and crime statistics. (12)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for mechanisms to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in Grenada (Table 7).

Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the minimum age for hazardous work is age 18.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be undertaken and limit the number of hours for light work.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminalizes all forms of child trafficking, including in cases that do not include the use of force, threats, abuse of power, or other forms of coercion.	2015 – 2022
	Enact legislation prohibiting the use, procuring, or offering of a child for all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws providing free basic education include all children in Grenada, including non-citizens.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Provide sufficient funding and human resources to allow agencies responsible for the enforcement of labor laws to fulfill their mission.	2015 – 2022
	Collect and publish labor law enforcement data, including information on inspectorate funding and the training system for labor inspectors.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors receive trainings on laws and enforcement of laws related to child labor.	2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including the worst forms of child labor, to inform policies and programs.	2009 – 2022

REFERENCES

- 1 UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, both sexes (%). Accessed March 15, 2023. For more information, please see "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" in the Reference Materials section of this report. <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>
- 2 ILO. Analysis of Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Statistics from National Household or Child Labor Surveys. Analysis received March 2023. Please see "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" in the Reference Materials section of this report.
- 3 Government of Grenada. Employment Act, Act No. 14 of 1999. Enacted: 1999. <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/53925/65176/E99GRD01.htm>
- 4 Government of Grenada. Constitution, No. 2155 of 1973. Enacted: 1973. <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/constitutions/grenada/gren73eng.html>
- 5 Government of Grenada. Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act. Enacted: June 11, 2014. Source on file.
- 6 Government of Grenada. Electronic Crimes Bill. Enacted: October 3, 2013. <https://nowgrenada.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Electronic-Crimes-Bill.pdf?x65460>
- 7 Government of Grenada. Criminal Code. Enacted: January 20, 1987. <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/95182/111978/F2077022491/GRD95182.PDF>
- 8 Government of Grenada. Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, No. 29 of 2012. Enacted: 2012. Source on file.
- 9 Government of Grenada. Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, No. 7 of 1992. https://laws.gov.gd/index.php?option=com_edocman&view=category&id=710&Itemid=184
- 10 Government of Grenada. Education Act, No. 21 of 2002. Enacted: 2002. https://laws.gov.gd/index.php?option=com_edocman&view=category&id=717&Itemid=185
- 11 U.S. Department of State. Country Report on Human Rights Practices- April 12, 2022: Grenada. Washington, D.C., 2021. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/grenada/>
- 12 U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown. Reporting. January 12, 2023.
- 13 U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown. Reporting. February 12, 2021.
- 14 U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. March 22, 2022.
- 15 U.S. Embassy- Bridgetown. Reporting. January 18, 2022.

In 2022, Guatemala made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government enacted a decree amending the Penal Code to include and increase the penalties for online sexual exploitation crimes committed against children. The Labor Inspectorate also increased the number of its human rights inspectors from 4 to 11, whose purview includes child labor issues. In addition, the government relaunched the "Protecting our Greatest Treasure" media campaign to raise awareness of protecting children and adolescents from sexual exploitation and human trafficking in the tourism sector. However, children in Guatemala are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the production of coffee. Moreover, in Guatemala an insufficient number of labor inspectors limits the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare's ability to address child labor. In addition, existing social programs are insufficient to reach all children engaged in exploitative labor, particularly those engaged in domestic work or agriculture.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Guatemala.

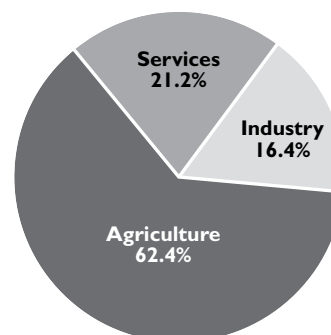
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	7 to 14	11.0 (330,547)
Attending School (%)	7 to 14	90.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	8.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		87.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Nacional de Empleo e Ingreso I (ENEI I), 2021. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 7-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Planting and harvesting coffee, cacao, sugarcane, corn, broccoli, bananas, plantains, and flowers (3-11)
	Harvesting palm kernels and producing palm oil (5,9,11)
	Ranching, forestry, and fishing (3,12,13)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown (3,14)
	Manufacturing gravel (crushed stones)† and fireworks† (3,4,6,7,15)
Services	Domestic work and house-sitting† (7,9,16)
	Street work,† including vending,† performing,† cleaning windshields and windows,† begging, and shoe shining† (9,17-23)
	Making corn tortillas (4,7,9,14,22-25)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Working as store clerks in small family-owned corner stores (<i>abarroterías</i>) (7,8,25)
	Vehicle and motorcycle repair (12,13)
	Garbage scavenging† and working in garbage dumps† (26)
	Working as servers in restaurants (<i>comedores</i>) (9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in agriculture, domestic work, street begging, making corn tortillas, and vending (3,17-24,27-29)
	Use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,18)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,4,9,12,17,18,24,28-30)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking, and stealing and transporting contraband as a result of criminal and gang recruitment, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,12,17-25)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Indigenous children account for more than half of child laborers in Guatemala, and children in rural areas are more likely to work than children in urban areas. Most of these children are engaged in agricultural activity. (18,31) Children as young as age 5 work in coffee fields picking and carrying heavy loads of coffee beans. (32) In addition, reports indicate that children work as street performers or beggars. Some of these children are also sold to criminal organizations, work very long hours, and are at times forced to wear paint, which is often toxic, to attract more attention as they perform in the streets. (18)




Children, both Guatemalan-born and from other countries, are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, including in sex tourism. (16,28) Guatemala is a destination country for child sex tourists from Canada, the United States, and Western Europe. (4,30) Departments with high numbers of commercial sexual exploitation victims include Alta Verapaz, Escuintla, Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Quiché, and Quetzaltenango. (14) Girls, LGBTQI+ persons, and indigenous Guatemalans are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. (28) In addition, some children are forced to engage in street begging and vending in Guatemala City and along the border with Mexico. (29,30) Furthermore, multiple sources indicate that children are recruited into gangs to serve as lookouts, couriers, and drug dealers, or to commit extortion. Moreover, criminal organizations, including gangs, exploit girls in sex trafficking. (3,16,18)

Significant barriers to accessing education exist in Guatemala, particularly for girls, indigenous children, and children in rural areas. (3) Although education is free in Guatemala, there is an insufficient number of primary and secondary schools to accommodate all children. (18,33) A lack of teachers, transportation, textbooks, and sanitary facilities at public schools, as well as the long distances some children must travel to get to school, also create barriers to education. (12,13,34) Other barriers to education include sexual violence, insecurity, crime and violence in the school's surrounding areas, and the risk of suffering violence during travel to school. (12) The education system is also unable to address the needs of students with disabilities, and the few existing education programs for children with disabilities rely mainly on non-profit support. (3,14,18,24) In addition, Girls in rural areas have lower enrollment rates in secondary school than boys, while indigenous children in general have lower enrollment rates compared to other children. (14,18,24,35,36) Furthermore, there are not enough qualified teachers to provide instruction in the predominant native languages, and classroom materials available in these languages are insufficient. (35-38)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Guatemala has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Guatemala's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including insufficient light work protections for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Articles 31, 148 and 272 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Government Accord 112-2006; Ministerial Agreement Number 260-2019 (39-41)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 148 of the Labor Code; Article 1 of Government Accord 250-2006; Article 32 of Government Accord 112-2006 (39,40,42)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 4 of Ministerial Accord 154-2008 (43)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 202 and 202 <i>ter</i> of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 51 of the Law of Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents (44,45)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 202 <i>ter</i> and <i>quater</i> of the Penal Code (44)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 191-194, 193 <i>bis</i> and <i>ter</i> , and 195 <i>bis</i> and <i>ter</i> of the Penal Code (44)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 27, 306, and 307 of the Penal Code (44)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 57 of the Law of Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents (45)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 68 and 69 of the Constitutive Law of the Guatemalan Army (46)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 57 of the Law of Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents; Article 245 of the Constitution (45,47)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 74 of the Constitution; Article 33 of the National Education Law; Ministerial Agreement 1055-2009 (47-49)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 74 of the Constitution; Article 1 of Government Agreement 226-2008; Article 33 of the National Education Law (47,48,50)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (47,51)

In March 2022, the government enacted Decree 11-2022, which amended the Penal Code to include the crime of facilitating sexual acts with a third party through the use of technology and increases penalties for this type of sexual exploitation from between 1 and 3 years to 6 to 12 years. (34,52) Although Articles 32 and 150 of the Labor Code allow the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS) to authorize children under age 14 to work under exceptional circumstances—including if MTPS determines that children must work to support their

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family due to poverty—the law does not define the total number of hours, kinds of tasks, or age range applicable for this exception, which is inconsistent with international standards on light work. (39) However, the MTPS indicated that no such exceptions have been granted since 2016. (3,53,54) In addition, the MTPS previously approved Ministerial Agreement Number 260-2019, "Procedure for the effective application of Convention 138 of the International Labor Organization, regarding the Convention on the Minimum Age for Admission of Employment," which sets forth procedures for protecting adolescents between ages 15 and 18 from the worst forms of child labor. (18,41) However, the agreement does not explicitly cover children age 14, who are allowed to work under Guatemala's Labor Code (or children under age 14 who are allowed to work in exceptional circumstances). Therefore, it is unclear if this mechanism effectively raises the minimum age for work to age 15. (41) In addition, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of their compulsory education. (39-41,47-49)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare's (MTPS) Inspection Division	Enforces child labor laws, including prohibitions on the worst forms of child labor, by inspecting businesses and responding to child labor complaints. (18) Refers children found engaged in child labor to government social services, complaints of child labor to the MTPS Adolescent Workers Protection Unit, cases of the worst forms of child labor to the Secretariat Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation, and Trafficking in Persons (SVET), and unresolved cases to labor courts for review and sanctions, as appropriate. (12,55,56)
National Civil Police (PNC)	Investigate cases of child trafficking through the Trafficking in Persons and Forced Labor Unit located within the Special Investigation Police, and operate a hotline to receive reports of suspected child trafficking cases. Also conduct welfare inspections in child labor cases and refer cases to civil court. (12,18)
Public Ministry, Special Prosecutor's Office	Receives case referrals involving the worst forms of child labor from labor inspectors. Investigates cases of human trafficking and forced labor through the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Trafficking in Persons. (12)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Guatemala took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MTPS that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient inspection planning.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4.96 million (57)	\$5.73 million (34)
Number of Labor Inspectors	178 (12)	152 (34)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (39)	Yes (39)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (34)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10,58)	17,814 (54)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	16 (12)	43 (34)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	4 (12)	15 (34)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (12)	15 (34)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (34)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (12)	Yes (34)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (39)	Yes (39)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (57)	Yes (34)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (12)	Yes (34)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (34)

In 2022, the Labor Inspectorate expanded the number of specialized inspectors from 4 to 11 to cover human rights issues, including child labor. (34) The Inspectorate also hired an expert in childhood and adolescence to support the development of training materials for labor inspectors. (34) In addition, the Ministry of Labor's budget was increased in 2022, which allowed the ministry to purchase more vehicles for labor inspectors at the department level. (34) In June 2022, the government also launched a child labor training course for labor inspectors and administrative personnel from MTPS. The training course was developed with support from the Ministry of Labor of Costa Rica. (59)

Although laws governing the minimum age for work and hazardous work apply in both the formal and informal sectors, labor inspectors rarely inspect informal workplaces, in which child labor violations are most likely to occur. (3,14,18,24,54) The Ministry of Labor also does not routinely conduct unannounced inspections. (34,54) Research indicates that labor inspectors are not appropriately trained to perform inspections for child labor. (3,8,9,54) Furthermore, MTPS reported that inspectors conducted site visits in Spanish only, potentially hindering the effectiveness of these inspections when encountering indigenous language speakers. (14,54) Research also indicates that Guatemala does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,14,18,24,34,54,60,61) In addition, reports indicate that sometimes conciliations are being carried out in lieu of inspections and there are significant issues in the way conciliations are carried out in the country. (54,58) Reports have shown that in some conciliations, facts are not verified, workers have been coerced to accept partial benefits, and labor inspectors have received bribes. (10,58) Moreover, since many labor inspections are done by desk review instead of conducted at the worksite, fines are successfully challenged in court, leaving the government unable to collect penalties. (58) Reports also indicate that the government mechanism for filing child labor complaints is not efficient and coordination between agencies in cases of child labor is lacking and requires the intervention of NGOs or international donors. (3,18,24)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guatemala took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the National Civil Police that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (34)
Number of Investigations	201 (12)	365 (34)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	19 (12)	122 (34)
Number of Convictions	38 (12)	48 (34)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (12)	Yes (34)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (34)

The Public Ministry identified and removed 17 child victims of labor exploitation from January to October 2022 in coordination with the Solicitor General's Office and the Ministry of Labor. (34) The Office Against Trafficking in Persons also received 106 complaints related to the commercial sexual exploitation of minors, and 2 complaints related to the recruitment of minors by organized criminal groups. (34) Additionally, 48 individual defendants were convicted for child labor crimes such as trafficking in persons and child pornography between January and October 2022. (34) However, local NGOs indicate that training is insufficient for enforcement personnel outside the capital. (3,24) Law enforcement agencies also lack sufficient vehicles, fuel, and criminal investigators, particularly outside Guatemala City. (14,54) Other agencies within the government have also noted that resources are inadequate to carry out criminal investigations related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,12) Moreover, the Public Ministry noted that the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Human Trafficking does not have an assigned budget, as it is instead dependent on the overall budget allocated to the Public Ministry. (14)

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Communities in rural areas continue to suffer from a lack of government services when compared to urban areas, including government assistance for survivors of the worst forms of child labor. (54) However, in order to improve the referral process for victims of crime, the Public Ministry established a messaging system to support communication between the different institutions that offer social services to survivors. (62) The government also operated specialized courts to hear cases of human trafficking of adults and children and gender-based violence. Despite this, judges are often unable to schedule hearings and trials in a timely manner, and officials often lack sufficient training to properly identify human trafficking cases and pursue trafficking charges. (29,30)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that may hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including lack of coordination between agencies and civil society.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Inter-Institutional Coordinating Entity Against Labor Exploitation and Child Labor (CICELTI)	Aims to identify victims of human trafficking, make anti-trafficking in persons institutions more effective, and provide support to survivors to prevent them from being targeted again. Also coordinates efforts to address labor exploitation, forced labor, and child labor. (14) Launched in 2020 by MTPS, the Solicitor General's Office, the Public Ministry, and SVET. (14) In 2022, CICELTI received 55 complaints related to labor exploitation, forced labor, or the worst forms of child labor and added new members to support individuals rescued from labor exploitation, including the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS). (34) However, reports indicate that challenges remain related to the provision of social services for children due to the lack of coordination between government agencies. (10)

‡ The government had other mechanisms that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (43,63)

Despite improvements in inter-agency coordination to address human trafficking, there continues to be a lack of effective coordination among other government institutions and civil society actors who provide services and protection to survivors of child labor. Some civil society organizations have indicated that despite being members of the Inter-Institutional Commission Against Trafficking in Persons (CIT), the commission is not fully inclusive of civil society perspectives, and these organizations participate on the commission primarily as observers. (29) Furthermore, reporting indicates that the Secretariat Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation, and Trafficking in Persons (SVET) lacks political support from other parts of the government and its small budget limits its reach beyond urban areas, even though it plays a significant role in addressing human trafficking in Guatemala. (29)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that may hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of key national policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Comprehensive Health Care Protocol with Cultural Relevance for Children and Adolescents in Situations of Child Labor and its Worst Forms	Requires public health workers to enter information into a database about any child whose injuries may have been labor-related. Implemented by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS). (64,65) In 2022, the government continued implementing this policy, however reporting indicates that the government was in the process of updating it during the reporting period. (54)
Inter-Institutional Protocol for the Protection and Attention of Victims of Human Trafficking	Provides instruction on how to process sex crimes, including commercial sexual exploitation of children, and how to assist suspected victims of human trafficking. (43) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
Public Policy on Human Trafficking and the Comprehensive Protection of Victims (2014–2024)	Aims to guarantee protection for and comprehensive attention to human trafficking survivors, and promote prevention, detection, prosecution, and sanction of this crime. Includes a National Plan of Strategic Action that directs the government's actions on preventing and addressing human trafficking. (66) Reports indicate that the government was updating this policy in 2022. (54)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Business Network for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Guatemala (<i>Red Empresarial</i>)	Aims to promote the prevention and eradication of child labor. Members include the Ministries of Education and Agriculture, MTPS, the Thematic Working Group for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor, ILO, UNICEF, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and representatives from the private sector. (67) Reports indicate that this program was active in 2022, and continued to implement a variety of health, nutrition, education, and awareness programs in agricultural sectors. (54)
Ministry of Development's Social Poverty Reducing Programs†	Conditional Cash Transfer for Education and Health Program (<i>Mi Bono Social</i>) provides cash assistance to families with school-age children, conditioned on children's school attendance. (24) Similarly, the Conditional Cash Transfers for Food Assistance Program (<i>Mi Bolsa Social</i>) provides food assistance to poor families, with the requirement that their children attend school. (24,68) Social Dining Hall (<i>Mi Comedor Social</i>) provides access to food for people in situations of poverty, crisis, and emergency, including children. (14,68) Reporting indicates that all of these programs remained active in 2022, and that the government increased its budget allocations for all of them. (54) The Social Dining Hall Program received a budget increase of 61 percent, while the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education and Health Program received an increase of 18.9 percent. Lastly, the Conditional Cash Transfer Program for Food Assistance received a 5.6 percent increase. (54)
Mobile Units for the Prevention of Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking (UNIVET)	Established by SVET, with support from UNHCR. Consists of a fleet of seven vehicles that travel to areas in the country with little national government presence, with the aim of preventing and creating awareness about crimes related to exploitation, trafficking in persons, and sexual violence. (57,62,69) Carry out detection and awareness trainings on trafficking in persons within rural and often remote communities. (62) Provide information to survivors of crimes of trafficking in persons, but does not have authority to accept complaints or make referrals. Funded through bilateral and multilateral donors. (54,62) In 2022, the awareness trainings reached a total of 132,296 people, including 95,547 children and adolescents in 20 Departments and 163 municipalities. These awareness trainings included information sessions at schools about cybersecurity, how to avoid being targeted for crimes in cyberspace, and the available means to file complaints. (70,71)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Guatemala.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (12,27,29,62,64)

During the reporting period, the Government of Guatemala continued implementation of the Child Labor Risk Identification Model (MIRTI) through its pilot in the Municipality of San Pedro Sacatepequez. This model was originally implemented with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. (34) The government also relaunched the "Protecting our Greatest Treasure" media campaign to raise awareness on protecting children and adolescents from sexual exploitation and human trafficking in the travel and tourism sector, which reached 6,900 people. (34,72) However, reporting indicates that SVET and the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman fail to regularly monitor the effectiveness of awareness campaigns beyond tracking the number of individuals reached. (29) In addition, given the scope and magnitude of the problem, the programs described are not sufficient to significantly reduce the incidence of child labor. (12) Civil society organizations also indicate that social programs are inadequately funded, susceptible to local political influences, and fail to reach the rural interior of the country outside urban areas. (3,14,18) Although the government has implemented programs to assist children and families, research found no evidence of government programs specifically designed to assist children engaged in hazardous work, including those in agriculture and domestic work. (54)

Conditions in government-run children's shelters are also not adequate, and the government has not ensured the protection and safety of children under its care. In addition, the environment for the implementation of social programs that address child labor remains unsafe in some areas. The government has done little to investigate or prevent further instances of threats, intimidation, and violence—such as the murders of individuals working in social programs, including NGO officials, human rights workers, judges, and labor activists. (29,54)

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VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Guatemala (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested	
Legal Framework	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022	
	Eliminate the exception allowing some children under age 14 to work, or establish a light work framework for children ages 12 to 14 outlining restrictions on working conditions, type of work, and number of hours of work permitted.	2010 – 2022	
	Clarify whether Ministerial Agreement 260-2019 raises the minimum working age to 15.	2019 – 2022	
	Raise the minimum age for work from age 14 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.	2022	
Enforcement	Ensure that inspectors carry out inspections in the informal sector, an area in which child labor is known to occur.	2018 – 2022	
	Improve the quality of inspections by ensuring that inspectors receive effective training, dedicate the necessary time to carry out more comprehensive inspections, and routinely carry out unannounced labor inspections.	2017 – 2022	
	Ensure that labor inspectors are able to communicate with indigenous language speakers, including those who may be underage, to adequately conduct inspections for child labor violations.	2020 – 2022	
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 152 to 484 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of 7.3 million people.	2015 – 2022	
	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate to include more on-site investigations of worksites.	2021 – 2022	
	Ensure that conciliations are properly conducted and in accordance with the labor code.	2021 – 2022	
	Improve effectiveness of child labor complaint and referral mechanisms to ensure timely responses to complaints.	2018 – 2022	
	Ensure that fines for labor violations are collected.	2019 – 2022	
	Dedicate more staff and train criminal law enforcement officials, particularly those outside the capital, on laws related to the worst forms of child labor.	2013 – 2022	
	Ensure that hearings and trials addressing human trafficking and gender-based violence in specialized courts are scheduled in a timely manner and that judges and officials are trained in trafficking in persons concepts.	2016 – 2022	
	Ensure that criminal investigators have sufficient resources and staff to conduct quality criminal investigations in all geographical areas of the country, such as assigning a budget specifically to the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Human Trafficking.	2009 – 2022	
	Coordination	Strengthen coordination efforts to institutionalize relationships between civil society representatives and government agencies that provide services to survivors of child labor.	2013 – 2022
		Ensure that the Secretariat Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation, and Trafficking in Persons has the resources, authority, and political support necessary to combat human trafficking countrywide.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and that data on these activities to address child labor are published during the reporting period.	2017 – 2022	
Social Programs	Remove barriers to education for all children, including girls and indigenous children, children with disabilities, and children living in rural areas, by recruiting and training more qualified teachers, providing instruction in indigenous languages, building additional schools with appropriate facilities, increasing security, providing textbooks to all public schools, and removing school fees and transportation costs.	2015 – 2022	
	Ensure that children removed from child labor and exploitation situations are provided with adequate social services.	2021 – 2022	
	Ensure that social programs are implemented, well-funded, able to carry out their objectives, and reach populations outside urban centers, and report on yearly activities.	2018 – 2022	
	Initiate social programs to address child labor in agriculture and domestic work, and for children who perform other types of hazardous work.	2009 – 2022	
	Regularly monitor the effectiveness and impact of social programs such as awareness campaigns beyond the number of citizens reached.	2017 – 2022	
	Ensure high standards of safety and care for children in government-run shelters.	2016 – 2022	
	Ensure the safety of NGO officials, human rights workers, judges, and labor activists to facilitate a secure environment for the implementation of social programs that address and prevent child labor.	2017 – 2022	

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In 2022, Guinea made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government substantially increased the budget of the labor inspectorate compared to the previous year. In addition, the government opened shelters for trafficking survivors, including child survivors, in Conakry and N'Zérékoré, and initiated a new trafficking in persons program with the International Organization for Migration. However, children in Guinea are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in artisanal mining and forced begging. Laws related to the minimum age for work do not meet international standards because they do not include children working outside of a formal employment relationship or children who are self-employed. The government also lacks a coordinating mechanism and national policy to address all relevant worst forms of child labor, and social programs do not address the extent of the child labor problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Guinea. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	31.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	54.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	17.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		59.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS5), 2016. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming cashews, cocoa, coffee, rubber, and palm oil (3-5)
	Herding livestock (3,6)
	Capturing and processing fish, sometimes with exposure to inclement weather, dangerous water surfaces, dangerous equipment, poor sanitation, and lack of fresh food and water (3,6)
	Forestry (7)
Industry	Mining† granite, gold, and diamonds, including handling toxic chemicals, and quarrying gravel (3,6-13)
	Manufacturing, including soapmaking and dyeing, sometimes working with hazardous chemicals (6,7)
	Construction,† including carrying heavy loads, operating machinery, and fabricating construction materials, such as bricks (7,13-17)
Services	Street work, including vending, begging, shoe shining, and carrying heavy loads as porters in the transportation sector (6,7,18-21)
	Working in restaurants (6)
	Domestic work (3,6,7,22)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in street vending, domestic work, artisanal mining, herding, fishing, and farming (3,6,14,23)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,6,23,24)
	Forced begging (14,21,25)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs (7)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Guinea is a source, destination, and transit country for child trafficking. Guinean girls are often subjected to domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation in various West African, Middle Eastern, and European countries, while Guinean boys are subjected to forced labor in gold and diamond mines. (3,23,26,27) Within Guinea, children are subjected to forced labor and hazardous conditions in the artisanal gold and diamond mining sectors, including frequent collapses of open pit mines, and the use of dangerous chemicals. (6,7,10,18,23,26,27) Research indicated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, more children and families moved to the gold mining regions, and a rising number of children have been subjected to forced labor in artisanal gold mining. (28) In addition, the commercial sexual exploitation of children is common in the capital city of Conakry and in the mining regions. (14,26)




Through the system of *confiage*, parents who are unable to care for their children send them to relatives or strangers, who are expected to provide food, shelter, and schooling for the children in exchange for housework. However, in many cases children are subjected to abuse, sexual violence, and forced labor in domestic work. (9,25) In addition, children in Guinea are sometimes subjected to forced begging, and research indicates that albino children are particularly vulnerable. In certain cases, traffickers promised to enroll the children in school, but instead they subjected the children to forced begging in Conakry. (6,14,21,26,29)

Significant factors hinder access to education and therefore leave children vulnerable to child labor. A third of children in Guinea receive less than 6 years of schooling. (21) Barriers to education include the limited number of public schools, poor school infrastructure and sanitation, lack of transportation, the lack of teachers (particularly in rural areas), and violence in schools. (6,7,14,30) Guinean families must pay school fees and other indirect costs, which can be prohibitively expensive. (6,18) Girls face particular barriers to school attendance and completion, and sometimes leave school early due to cultural barriers, pregnancy, and sexual harassment at school. (21,30) Finally, since children are required to have birth registration to attend school, some unregistered children are unable to access education. (31,32) Since the passage of the revised Children's Code in March 2020, the government has carried out multiple birth registration campaigns to provide documentation to children. (6) During the reporting period, the Guinean government also worked with UNICEF to streamline birth registration procedures. (33)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Guinea has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Guinea's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Articles 121.4 and 137.5 of the Labor Code; Article 919 of the Children's Code (34,35)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 2–4 of Order 2791 Working Conditions for Employees Aged Under 18 Years; Article 137.4 of the Labor Code; Articles 922 and 925 of the Children's Code (34-36)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2 and 4 of Order 2791 Working Conditions for Employees Aged Under 18 Years; Article 135 of the Mining Code; Article 137.6 of the Labor Code; Articles 909–936 of the Children's Code (34-37)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6, 893–901, 902–905, 912–915, and 922–923 of the revised Children's Code; Articles 194, 195 and 323–329 of the Penal Code; Articles 2, 4, and 137.6–7 of the Revised Labor Code (2014) (34,35,38)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 195, 323, and 324 of the Penal Code; Articles 893–901 and 912 of the Children's Code (34,38)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 346–348 and 355 of the Penal Code; Articles 820 and 852–856 of the Children's Code (34,38)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 137.6 of the Labor Code; Article 890 of the Children's Code; Article 344 of the Penal Code (34,35,38)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 941 of the Children's Code (34)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 792.7 of the Penal Code; Article 941 of the Children's Code (34,38)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 6, Title I of Education Decree (39)
Free Public Education	No		

* Country has no conscription (40)

The revised Children's Code of 2019 and the Labor Code allow children between the ages of 12 and 14 to perform light work, which does not meet international standards as it applies to children under the age of 13. (34,35) In addition, these laws do not prescribe the number of hours per week permitted for light work, nor do they specify the conditions under which light work may be done. Moreover, these laws only apply to workers with written employment contracts, leaving self-employed children and children working outside of formal employment relationships vulnerable to exploitation. (34,35,41) While Guinea's former Constitution stipulated free education up to the age of 16 under conditions provided by the law, the government did not enact legislation to institute free basic education standards within Guinea's legal framework, and during the September 2021 coup d'état, the transitional government dissolved the Constitution. (28,42,43) On September 27, 2021, Colonel Mamady Doumbouya released the Transition Charter, which supersedes the Constitution and law until a new Constitution is promulgated. Guinea's penal and civil codes remain in force. (40,43)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Public Services	Enforces all labor laws, including those related to child labor, through its General Labor Inspectorate. (6,18,35)
Ministry of Security and Ministry of Defense	The Ministry of Security's Office for the Protection of Gender, Children, and Morals (OPROGEM) investigates criminal cases related to the protection of minors, including the worst forms of child labor. (3,6,15,26,40) There is an OPROGEM representative in each of the 33 central police stations of the country who specializes in issues related to the trafficking of women and children. (26,44) The Ministry of Defense's Central Service for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons (SCPPV) investigates criminal cases related to the protection of minors, including the worst forms of child labor, in rural areas where there is less police presence. SCPPV was formed in January 2020, with the aim of reducing pressure on OPROGEM and allowing OPROGEM to focus on urban areas. (40)
Ministry of Justice	Delivers judgements through its Juvenile Court on all cases involving children, including child labor cases. (6) The Juvenile Court also collaborates and monitors cases with MOJ's National Directorate of Supervised Education and Judicial Youth Protection, which is the supervising body of public social services centers. (6,7,14,15)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Guinea took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human and material resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$11,500 (6)	\$174,182 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	167 (6)	159 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (35)	Yes (35)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	120 (6)	441 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (6)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (6)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (6)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (35)	Yes (7,35)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (6)	Yes (7,28,45)

The government significantly increased the budget for labor inspections in 2022, to over 15 times the 2021 budget. However, the labor inspectorate continued to maintain only a single vehicle, and provided insufficient resources for fuel, restricting the labor inspectorate's ability to conduct labor inspections. (7,14,15,46,47)

Reporting suggests that in 2022, 25 labor inspectors received training on trafficking in persons, including the responsibility of labor inspectors to refer children identified during their field inspections to social services. (7,28) In addition, a new referral mechanism was developed and implemented by the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking and Similar Practices, with standard operating procedures for any individual or agency to identify and refer potential cases to the relevant specialized body or services. (28,45) In 2022, the labor inspectorate conducted inspections in Conakry, Boke in Lower Guinea, and Siguiri in Upper Guinea, and sectors inspected included mining, education, health, and auto garages. Research did not identify evidence that the government conducted inspections in the agriculture sector, in which child labor is known to be present. (7) The government did not provide full law enforcement data for inclusion in this report, including the number of child labor violations found, penalties imposed, and penalties collected. (7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guinea took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (24)	Yes (48)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (6)	Unknown (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (6)	Unknown (7)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	Unknown (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (6)	Yes (7,28,45)

The Government of Guinea did not provide complete data on criminal law enforcement efforts for use in this report, including data on the number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and penalties imposed. (7,28) During the reporting period, judicial sector officials in Guinea received training on trafficking in persons, funded by the European Union and the Government of Germany, at the request of the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices. Guinea's 2022 National Development Budget also financed some trafficking in persons training for National Police and National Gendarmerie officials. (48) Office for the Protection of Gender, Children, and Morals (OPROGEM) staff also received training on trafficking in persons during the reporting period, funded by Expertise France. (48) In December 2022, the government purchased 41 motorbikes in order to help OPROGEM investigators access remote areas of the country to reach victims of gender-based violence. (7,28) However, research has indicated that the OPROGEM Special Police Unit was underfunded and lacked sufficient office supplies, transportation, or fuel to enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,6,15,28,49)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efforts to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices (CNLTPPA)	Coordinates anti-trafficking efforts. Led by the Ministry of Social Action and Vulnerable People, includes representatives from OPROGEM, the Ministry of Labor and Public Service, and other ministries. (23,50) Coordinates with civil society and foreign donors. Organizes awareness campaigns for human trafficking prevention. (23,50) During the reporting period, the committee met regularly, and was allocated funds by the government for equipment, supplies, and communications budget costs. (23,48) It also issued new standard operating procedures for detecting, reporting, and providing assistance to potential trafficking victims. (28,45) However, the CNLTPPA lacked authority to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts effectively. (23)

Although the government has established a coordination mechanism on child protection and human trafficking, research found no evidence of a mechanism that coordinates the government's efforts to address all forms of child labor. (26,28)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including covering all worst forms of child labor.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan for Trafficking in Persons (2020–2022)	Focused on strategies to address child trafficking, including strengthening the legal framework, reinforcing prevention devices, promoting assistance and support of survivors, strengthening cooperative partnerships, and improving monitoring and evaluation. (23,26,52) Implemented by CNLTPPA. (7) Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), held a technical workshop during the reporting period to develop an action plan, the National Action Plan expired at the end of 2022, with no known replacement plan in place. (7,48,53)
Ten-Year National Education Plan for Guinea (2020–2029)	Launched under the third tier of the National Economic and Social Development Policy. Sets the goal of progressively providing free primary education in Guinea, and makes provisions to ensure that vulnerable students, such as orphans and disabled and albino students, have access to education. (54) Implemented by the Ministry of National Education and Literacy at the primary school level and covers the 10-year period from 2020 to 2029. (21,54) Has received over \$60 million in funding from the Global Partnership for Education, the French Development Agency, and UNICEF. The plan was active during the reporting year, but research was unable to determine what specific activities were undertaken during this time. (7,55)

Although Guinea has a policy that addresses child trafficking, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor. (15,47)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Temporary Reception and Child Protection Centers for Trafficking Victims	In 2022, the government opened shelters for trafficking survivors, including child survivors, as part of the National Action Plan for Trafficking in Persons, with funding from the EU and technical assistance from Expertise France. (7,56-58) The newly inaugurated children's shelter in the N'Zérékoré administrative region identified and sheltered child trafficking survivors during the reporting period. The OCPH CARITAS Guinea Sonfonia reception center in Conakry has capacity to shelter up to 66 trafficking survivors. (48,57) The centers were established through a partnership with CNLTPPA and the Ministry of Women's Promotion, Children, and Vulnerable People, as part of an EU project entitled "Support the Fight Against Human Trafficking in the States of the Gulf of Guinea," which aims to prevent human trafficking in six countries in the Gulf of Guinea. (7,56,59,60) In addition to the newly inaugurated shelters, SCPPV runs a shelter in Conakry, with accommodations for child trafficking victims. (48)
Guinea Project for Results in Early Childhood and Basic Education (2019–2024)	\$50 million World Bank-funded project implemented by the Ministry of Pre-University Education and Literacy that aims to increase access to quality early childhood and basic education, and strengthen the overall capacity of the education system. (61) After a pause in 2021 due to political unrest, the project was relaunched in March 2022. During the reporting period the project resumed planning and took steps toward teacher recruitment and digital device acquisition. (28,62,63)
IOM Trafficking in Persons Program*	New trafficking in persons program initiated in 2022 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with IOM, which includes a focus on the collection, analysis, centralization, and observation of data on trafficking in persons. In addition, one component of the program is a Financial Support Fund to provide financing and training for trafficking survivors returning to Guinea. (48)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

Although Guinea has established a trafficking in persons program and inaugurated new shelters for trafficking survivors, research found that the scope of programs implemented by the government is insufficient for the extent of the problem, including the need to address children engaged in agriculture, domestic work, forced begging, mining, and street work. (21,66,67)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Guinea (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for light work to age 13 to comply with international standards; ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken and the number of hours that are permitted for children engaged in light work.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that all children are protected by the minimum age for work laws, including children working outside of a formal employment relationship and children who are self-employed.	2009 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic education.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections.	2021 – 2022
	Conduct labor inspections in the agricultural sector.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal law enforcement officers, including the Special Police Unit of the Office for the Protection of Gender, Children, and Morals, receive adequate human and material resources to enforce labor laws, including office supplies, fuel, and vehicles.	2020 – 2022
	Publish data on labor law enforcement, including the number of labor violations found and penalties imposed and collected.	2022
	Publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts to address the worst forms of child labor, including the numbers of investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and penalties imposed.	2011 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices has the authority to coordinate all anti-trafficking efforts in Guinea.	2022
	Establish a coordinating mechanism to prevent and eliminate all forms child labor.	2021 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that a new national action plan is created and implemented to continue addressing child trafficking.	2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Ten-Year Education Program for Guinea and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to make education accessible for all children by eliminating fees and associated costs, improving school infrastructure and sanitation, providing transportation, protecting students from violence and sexual harassment in schools, ensuring that pregnant students may continue their studies, and increasing school and teacher availability.	2010 – 2022
	Provide all children with access to birth registration.	2020 – 2022
	Institute programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture, domestic work, forced begging, mining, and street work.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, Guinea-Bissau made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

The National Guard began training border officials on how to detect human trafficking situations and created grassroots committees within villages near border locations to aid in identifying human traffickers using illegal border crossings. The newly developed case management and referral system, under the lead of the National Institute for Women and Children, was also used by 28 institutions during the reporting period, and although the National Emergency Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Trafficking in Persons expired in 2021, it continued to be implemented and contributed toward the identification and reintegration of 198 child trafficking victims at the national and transnational levels. However, children in Guinea-Bissau are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. Prohibitions against the commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards since the prostitution of children is not criminally prohibited in the country's legal framework. In addition, even though a new labor code was put into effect in 2022, the minimum age for work is not in compliance with international standards since the law's minimum age protections do not apply to children without a work contract. Furthermore, law enforcement officials do not receive sufficient resources to adequately conduct inspections and prosecute cases of child labor, and social programs do not fully address the extent of the problem in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Guinea-Bissau. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	18.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	20.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of cashews (3-6)
	Fishing (4,7)
Industry	Construction (7)
Services	Domestic work (3,4,8,9)
	Street work, including shoe-shining and vending (10)
	Working as mechanics, including maintaining and repairing automobiles (4,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Working in nightclubs, including dishwashing and custodial work (7,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (12,13)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, mining, and street work, including begging (8,9,13)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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According to the latest national child labor survey, more than 169,200 children between the ages of 5 and 17 work; 85 percent of these children work in agriculture. (4) Organized networks of human traffickers affiliated with Koranic schools also force boys to beg within the country and in Senegal, and, to a lesser extent, in The Gambia, Guinea, and Mali. Although many Koranic school teachers provide religious education as traditionally intended, some force students, known as *talibés*, to beg on the streets for money and food. (8,13-15) Most *talibés* originate from the areas of Bafatá and Gabú in the eastern region of the country. (13,14,16) Bissau-Guinean boys are forced to work in street vending domestically; they are also transported by human traffickers to Senegal for forced labor in agriculture, mining, and street vending, particularly in the cities of Kolda and Ziguinchor. In addition, boys from Guinea-Bissau and from neighboring countries are forced to beg and harvest cashews domestically. (6,8,13) Furthermore, girls are subjected to forced labor in street vending and domestic work, and children in the Bijagós, an archipelago largely devoid of government and law enforcement presence, are vulnerable to sex trafficking. Children are also vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation in bars and hotels on mainland Guinea-Bissau. (9,13,15)

During the reporting period, school closures due to teacher strikes limited children's access to education. Reports also indicate that during the cashew harvesting season, children who assist their families are less likely to attend school. (6,11,17,18) Other educational barriers included inadequate school infrastructure and long distances to schools, particularly in rural areas. (5) In addition, in May 2022, the President of Guinea-Bissau dissolved parliament, and while parliamentary elections have been scheduled for June 2023, the government's ability to address the worst forms of child labor may have been impacted. (19,20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Guinea-Bissau has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Guinea-Bissau's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including minimum age protections that do not apply to children working without a contract.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Articles 1, 3, 288, 347, 350, and 520 of the Labor Code (21)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 354 and 355 of the Labor Code (21)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 354 and 355 of the Labor Code (21)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2–4 and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking; Article 106 of the Penal Code (22,23)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2–4 and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking (23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 3–5 and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking; Articles 134 and 136 of the Penal Code (22,23)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3 and 7 of the Decree on Narcotic Substances (24)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 31 of Law No. 4/99 (25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of Law No. 4/99 (25)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 12 and 13 of the Education System Law (26)
Free Public Education	No		Article 12(2) of the Education System Law (26)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (26,27)

In 2022, a new Labor Code went into effect raising the minimum work age to 16; however, the law only applies to workers who perform work under a formal employment agreement, which does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected by the minimum age to work. (21,28)

The law also does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation because the use of children in prostitution is not criminally prohibited. (22,23) In addition, the Education System Law states that basic education is compulsory and lasts 9 years; however, it only makes basic education free through grade six, leaving children in grades seven through nine without access to free basic education. (26) Moreover, as the minimum age for work is 16, children age 15 are vulnerable to exploitative child labor because they are not required to attend school while also not legally permitted to work. (21,26)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Public Administration	Enforces child labor legislation in collaboration with the Ministries of the Interior and Justice, and the National Institute for Women and Children (IMC). (5,7)
Ministry of the Interior's Public Order Police and National Guard	Enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, and refer relevant cases to IMC and NGOs for referral to social services providers. (7)
Judicial Police's Women and Children Brigade	Investigates cases involving the worst forms of child labor, apart from child trafficking, and refers these to IMC and NGOs. Comprising 10 officers. (5,7,29)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Guinea-Bissau took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial and human resources.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	33 (5)	24 (29)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (30)	Yes (30)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	156 (5)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (5)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (5)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (30)	Yes (30)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (5)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (5)	Yes (7)

In 2022, the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration, along with the ILO, conducted a week-long training initiative for approximately 100 technicians from different government departments, trade unions, and employers; the trainings promoted actions related to Decent Work, such as addressing forced labor, child labor, and human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. Participants discussed various topics, including the minimum age for work. (31)

Reports indicate that the number of labor inspectors is insufficient to target the scope of the problem in the country. Although the government provides salaries to labor inspectors, there is no additional budget to conduct investigations, which severely hindered the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration's ability to enforce child labor laws. (7) Reports also indicate that labor inspectors often rely on their personal means, including using their own vehicles and paying for their own gas, to perform labor inspections. Furthermore, due to a lack of funding, inspectors respond mainly to complaints rather than initiating targeted inspections based on risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents. (7) In 2022, there were no child labor specific inspections identified. (7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guinea-Bissau took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (5)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	0 (11)	8 (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (5)	8 (7)
Number of Convictions	0 (11)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (5)	0 (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (7)

During the reporting period, the National Guard began training border officials on how to detect potential human trafficking situations and created grassroots committees within villages near border locations to aid in identifying human traffickers utilizing illegal border crossings. In addition, the National Guard conducted four separate human trafficking presentations on national radio, including on the identification and support available for human trafficking victims. (32) The Judicial Police created an anonymous hotline to identify child victims

of abuse, including victims of child labor violations, and an awareness campaign was conducted over the radio and in schools to inform the public about the hotline. (7) However, reports indicate that criminal enforcement agencies lacked an operating budget and had very limited resources, hindering criminal law enforcement from investigating cases outside of the capital of Bissau, including in Gabú and Bafatá, where child labor is known to occur. (5,7,33,34)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that may hinder the adequate coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of an established stakeholder responsible for the standardized and consistent entry of cases into the referral and case management system.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interministerial Commission to Fight Child Labor	Coordinates the government's efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. (35) In 2022, held four meetings to validate the Decent Labor report. (36)

In 2022, under the lead of the National Institute for Women and Children (IMC), a referral and case management system implemented to improve coordination efforts was utilized by 28 institutions. A total of 515 cases were reported and managed within the system; however, the lack of an established stakeholder responsible for the standardized and consistent entry of data and the broad range of cases entered made it difficult to isolate child labor cases. (7)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (2021–2032)	Guides the government's policies for addressing violence toward children, including the worst forms of child labor. (37) Although the plan has not yet been approved by the Council of Ministers, research indicated that it was implemented during the reporting period. (38)
National Emergency Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Trafficking in Persons	Aims to prevent and reduce human trafficking by strengthening legislation, coordinating actions and initiatives among government agencies, promoting the coordination and collaboration of relevant stakeholders, and improving protective services and assistance to victims. Led by the IMC with the collaboration of national and international NGOs and relevant government entities. (39) Although the plan officially expired in 2021, it continued to be implemented during the reporting period, including through the rescue and reintegration of 198 child trafficking victims at the national and transnational levels. In addition, awareness and advocacy activities on human trafficking issues, particularly those related to children, continued. (38)
Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism	Seeks to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking in Guinea-Bissau, including in the Bijagós Archipelago, Bubaque, São Domingos, and Bissau. (36) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating and preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Friends of the Child Association Shelters (Associação dos Amigos da Criança)†	Donor-funded shelters, with government support, in Bissau and Gabú. (32) Operated by a national NGO providing social services to vulnerable children, including victims of the worst forms of child labor. In 2022, conducted a campaign to identify Bissau-Guinean children found begging in Senegal. (7,32)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Guinea-Bissau.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (40)

In 2022, the IOM completed a project supporting the development and implementation of a national strategic plan to prevent and protect victims of human trafficking. Outcomes included the capacity building of 60 border authorities and stakeholders on child trafficking and national referral mechanisms for the protection of victims. (7) The project also supported the return of 164 *talibé* children from Senegal and helped conduct a census of 780 *talibé* children throughout 22 Koranic schools. (7) However, reports suggest that the government did not conduct any national public awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking, including child trafficking. (34) Reports also indicate that due to funding constraints, services provided by shelters may not have met quality-of-care standards. (41) In addition, although Guinea-Bissau has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Guinea-Bissau (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including children without a formal employment agreement.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of a child for prostitution.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that all nine years of basic education are free.	2015 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age from 15 to 16 to be consistent with the minimum age for employment.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the number of law enforcement officials is sufficient to address the scope of the problem, and that both law and criminal enforcement officials receive adequate resources to inspect, investigate, and prosecute cases of child labor throughout the country, including in Bafatá and Gabú, where child labor is known to occur.	2009 – 2022
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating routine inspections and targeting inspections based on the analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2016 – 2022
	Publish information on labor enforcement data for the reporting period, including the amount of funding provided to the labor inspectorate, the number of labor inspections conducted at worksite, the number of child labor violations, penalties imposed and collected for child labor violations, whether routine inspections were conducted and targeted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2009 – 2022
Coordination	Establish a stakeholder to be responsible for standardized and consistent data entry into the referral and case management system to ensure child labor cases can easily be identified.	2022
Government Policies	Ensure a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, like the National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, is approved.	2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Significantly increase efforts to raise national awareness of human trafficking, including child trafficking.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that facilities, including shelters, have adequate resources to assist victims of the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, including in street work, particularly begging, and agriculture.	2009 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children by improving school infrastructure and providing transportation, particularly in rural areas.	2019 – 2022

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In 2022, Guyana made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government funded a training program for 1,661 officials and civil society representatives on human trafficking issues and increased funding from \$100 to \$125 for vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks. However, children in Guyana are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. Guyana does not meet the international standard for hazardous work for children because it allows children ages 16 to 17 to conduct night work in industrial activities. Guyanese law does not sufficiently prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children because it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution, although it prohibits other forms of sexual exploitation of children. In addition, law enforcement agencies have insufficient resources to conduct inspections in remote areas, including a lack of transportation and accommodation, and struggle to prosecute cases even with abundant evidence. The government did not publicly release information on its labor law enforcement or criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Guyana. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	10.1 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	96.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	18.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019–20. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming,† including the production of cabbage, cherries, limes, rice, squash, sugarcane, and charcoal (3-6)
	Forestry, including logging† and work in sawmills† (3,7)
	Fishing,† activities unknown (3,8)
Industry	Construction,† activities unknown (3,8)
	Mining,† including gold mining and bauxite mining (3,7)
Services	Domestic work (3)
	Welding† (3)
	Working in stores, bars, and restaurants (3)
	Street work, including selling fruit, washing cars, and begging (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,8-10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Children in Guyana are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Georgetown and in the country's interior. There are also reports of young girls in mining communities being subjected to commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking. (10,11) In addition, children are engaged in informal, small-scale mining in which they wash gold, operate dangerous machinery, and are exposed to hazardous chemicals. (4,12) Children in Guyana's interior and rural areas have limited access to education due to poor infrastructure, long distances to schools, transportation costs, and a shortage of qualified teachers. (3,12)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Guyana has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Guyana's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of prohibitions for child prostitution.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Sections 2 and 3, and Part 2, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17–22 of the Education Act (13,14)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Part 1, Article 2, and Part 2, Article 3 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17, 41, 46, and 75 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (14,15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Hazardous Occupations and Processes in Guyana; Part 1, Article 2 of the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act; Articles 17, 41, and 75 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (14-16)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2, 3, and 8 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 140 of the Constitution (17,18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 2(e) and 3(2) of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 50(3) of the Protection of Children Act (17,19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act (19)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 18 of the Defense Act and Defense Amendment Act (20,21)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 38E of the Constitution; Articles 13 and 22 of the Education Act (13,18)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 27 and 149H of the Constitution (18)

* Country has no conscription (22)

Guyana's hazardous work prohibitions for children do not meet international standards because children ages 16 to 17 are permitted to perform night work in industrial activities. (14) Moreover, although Article 50(1) of the Protection of Children Act and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act both prohibit selling or giving drugs to children, the law does not specifically prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of a child for the production and trafficking of drugs. (10,19,23,24) In addition, Guyanese law does not sufficiently prohibit all commercial sexual exploitation of children because it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution. (17) Moreover, Guyanese law does not criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor	Investigates reports of child labor, conducts routine labor inspections, and refers children identified during labor inspections to the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security's (MHSS) Countering Trafficking in Persons Unit (C-TIP) and the Childcare and Protection Agency. (12,25) Inspectors are permitted to conduct unannounced inspections in all sectors, but they are not authorized by law to assess penalties for labor law violations. When general labor violations are found, the employer is informed of the labor violation(s) and is given a period to rectify the violation. (3) If inspectors find child labor violations, they may report the employer to the Chief Labor Officer or police for investigation. (3,14) The Chief Labor Officer can file a case against an offending employer with a magistrate judge, who may impose a civil penalty. The welfare and social service officers of MHSS have the right to access private premises if there is a child labor investigation. (3) C-TIP, under the supervision of the Director of Public Prosecutions, prosecutes trafficking in persons cases. (12) In 2022, held an event with public stakeholders and agencies for World Day Against Child Labor. (26)
MHSS	Monitors and enforces child labor laws in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Forestry Commission, Geology and Mines Commission, National Insurance Scheme, and Guyana Police Force. The Chief Labor Officer handles special investigations stemming from child labor complaints and oversees routine labor inspections. (4) Includes a Trafficking in Persons Unit (staffed by five personnel) and the Childcare and Protection Agency, to which children identified during labor inspections are referred. (4,27)
Guyana Police Force (GPF)	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Works in consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), MHSS, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, depending on the circumstances of each case. (4) GPF's Trafficking in Persons Unit also investigates reports of human trafficking. (28)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient resources to conduct inspections in some areas.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	22 (3)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (14)	Yes (14)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	860 (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (3)

Labor officers conducted impromptu visits to work sites in the mining sector, logging districts, and capital to investigate labor practices and possible violations. (28) However, the government has acknowledged challenges enforcing Articles 41 (relating to child labor in factories) and 46 (relating to employer duties) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which aim to protect children from hazardous work. (30) The government also did not provide information on the funding for the labor inspectorate, the number of labor inspections conducted, the number of labor inspectors, the status of training for inspectors, and the number of child labor violations found. Research indicates that inspectors need additional resources, including transportation and accommodation, to conduct inspections in remote regions and that the government struggles to prosecute cases even with abundant evidence. (3,12,31)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guyana took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including lack of data on criminal prosecutions and convictions.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (3)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	8 (3)	6 (28)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	2 (28)
Number of Convictions	0 (3)	0 (28)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (3)	0 (28)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (28)

In 2022, only data on child trafficking was reported by the government, and information about the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties imposed for other worst forms of child labor is not known. During the reporting period, there were six investigations into forced labor and one ongoing prosecution, involving two non-Guyanese adult workers. Additionally, one individual was prosecuted for forced labor involving a female child while another individual was prosecuted in a case of sex trafficking involving a female child. (28) The government and NGOs reported that shelter accommodations, work permits and employment opportunities for non-Guyanese victims, counseling, medical checkups, and support for court appearances are available to human trafficking survivors. (28)

The MHSSS Countering Trafficking in Persons Unit (C-TIP) reported that during the reporting period it trained 1,661 government officials and civil society representatives using its own funds, and trained an additional 400 persons using funds from the Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons and the Guyana Police Force. Information regarding training related to children was not specified, but topics included an overview of the Trafficking in Persons Act 2005, victim identification, the roles of various actors, and training for new and current officers on the general indicators of human trafficking. (28)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to adequately address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons	Reports on human trafficking in Guyana and documents the government's response. Also addresses the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children and use of children in illicit activities, and acts as the management body for child labor referrals. (3,32) Divided into a ministerial arm and a technical arm, with six subcommittees co-chaired by MOHA and MHSS. (3,11,33) In 2022, the committee met monthly and held several awareness-raising sessions for indigenous communities in the interior. In addition, the Taskforce compiled trafficking in persons awareness pamphlets in Indigenous languages and started research on the primary causes of human trafficking in the country. (28)

Guyana's Commission on the Rights of the Child, which protects and promotes children's rights, including by addressing the worst forms of child labor, is not represented on the Ministerial Taskforce on Combating Trafficking in Persons. (3,12,34,35) Although Guyana has a Ministerial Taskforce on Combating Trafficking in Persons to coordinate efforts to address trafficking in persons, it does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of the National Child Labor Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Labor Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (2019–2025)	Aims to prevent and eliminate child labor in all its forms by 2025 by reconciling gaps and inconsistencies between existing national policies and ratified international conventions. Establishes a national framework to coordinate, enforce, monitor, and evaluate efforts to address child labor. (12,36,37) However, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period.
Ministerial Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Persons Action Plan (2021–2025)	Seeks to prevent and raise awareness about human trafficking, provide direct assistance to survivors, improve law enforcement's capacity to identify and respond to human trafficking, and strengthen inter-agency coordination and referral mechanisms. (9,38) With a budget of \$329,944, the plan also provides for the review and amendment of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act. (27,39) To implement the plan, the government conducted several raids in the mining regions and recruited additional staff to work as interpreters, investigators, and monitoring and evaluation officers. (28) The government also conducted anti-human trafficking awareness campaigns that were tailored to hotel owners, community leaders, maritime and port officials, parents, teachers, and private security firms. (28)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (40)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims†	Two government-funded, NGO-run shelters. Together in Peace Home caters exclusively to child survivors of human trafficking and accommodates 15 persons. Help & Shelter provides services to women and children who are survivors of human trafficking and other crimes. (28)
Government-Funded School Programs‡	Government-funded school programs aim to deter early school dropouts by providing job skills to at-risk youth who may not otherwise be able to complete their formal education. (4) All students in public and private schools from, nursery to secondary school, were eligible to receive government vouchers to purchase school uniforms, shoes, and backpacks. (3,27,41) In 2022, cash vouchers were increased from \$100 to \$125. (31,42) The government also has programs to improve access to education that provide hot meals to 16,000 students at schools in the interior, transportation for students in several remote areas, and books for school children. (9,12,27,41,43,44)
Child Advocacy Centers	Funded by private sector donations and UNICEF, and implemented by MHSSS, the UN Population Fund, and NGOs to provide services for abused children. (45) The MHSSS Childcare and Protection Agency oversees the 12 centers and makes referrals. (45-47) Child Advocacy Centers received a modest increase in budgetary allocations in 2022. (31)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Guyana.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3)

The government operates three 24/7 hotlines to report human trafficking, two for English speakers and the third for Spanish speakers. (28) While Guyana is a part of the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period. (48) Moreover, the scope of government programs targeting the worst forms of child labor is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including child labor in the mining industry and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (6)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Guyana.

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits all commercial sexual exploitation of children by prohibiting the use of children in prostitution.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits the use of children for illicit activities by prohibiting the use, procuring, or offering of a child for the production or trafficking of drugs.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law sufficiently prohibits children ages 16 to 17 from engaging in hazardous work that may jeopardize their health, safety, or morals.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on labor law enforcement, including inspectorate funding, number of inspectors, number and type of inspections conducted, and child labor violations found.	2015 – 2022
	Publish information about the training system for labor inspectors.	2022
	Remove barriers to enforcement and prosecution by strengthening the judicial system.	2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient resources to monitor the interior, where child labor is most prevalent, and other remote areas.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure the appropriate application of Articles 41 and 46 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act to protect children from work that may harm their physical health or emotional development.	2015 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal labor enforcement for all worst forms of child labor, including training for investigators, the number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, number of convictions, and number of imposed penalties.	2022
Coordination	Permit the Commission on the Rights of the Child to join and participate in the Ministerial Taskforce on Combating Trafficking in Persons.	2021 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies, including the National Child Labor Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that children are not prevented from attending school because of transportation costs and lack of infrastructure, and increase the number of qualified teachers, particularly in rural and interior areas.	2015 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in fishing and construction, to inform policies and programs.	2020 – 2022
	Develop new initiatives and expand existing programs to reach all children involved in the worst forms of child labor, including programs addressing child labor in the mining industry and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, Haiti made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government certified 29 new labor inspectors and trained them on child labor issues in the informal sector. Additionally, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund, the government created a new coordination mechanism dedicated to child protection issues. However, children in Haiti are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and domestic work. Minimum age protections for work apply only to children with a formal employment contract, which does not comply with international standards that require all children to be protected. In addition, Haiti lacks a clear minimum age for domestic work and a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children. Furthermore, social programs to address child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem, particularly in domestic work, agriculture, and child trafficking.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Haiti. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	34.4 (815,993)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	34.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary Completion Rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from *Enquête Mortalité, Morbidité et Utilisation des Services (DHS)*, 2012. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Raising livestock (3)
	Fishing (3-6)
Industry	Construction (4-6)
Services	Domestic work (5,7)
	Selling alcohol† and tobacco (3,4)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and washing cars (4-9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, street vending, and begging (4,5,7-10)
	Use in illicit activities, including by criminal groups in drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,7,10,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Reports indicate there are between 150,000 and 300,000 child domestic workers in Haiti. (8) Many of Haiti's human trafficking cases involve children subjected to forced labor as domestic workers. These children, exploited in what is commonly referred to as the *restavèk* system, are often physically abused, sexually exploited, and uncompensated for their services. (5,12) Some parents who are unable to care for their children send them to residential care centers or to relatives or strangers who are expected to provide the children with food, shelter, and schooling in exchange for household work. In practice, some of these children receive care and access to education, while many others become victims of labor exploitation and abuse. (7,13-15) In addition, Haiti has more than 750 orphanages that house more than 30,000 children who may be vulnerable to human trafficking and child labor. Research indicates that some children in orphanages engage in child labor as domestic workers and are prevented from attending school. (10,16-18) Children are also often forced into commercial or transactional sex to fund basic needs such as school-related expenses. (19) In addition, criminal gangs recruit children as young as age 10 and subject them to sexual exploitation, pornography, and forced criminal activity. (9,19)




Many children in Haiti are not registered at birth, and unregistered children are not able to access social services and educational programs provided by the government. (3) According to reports, approximately 30 percent of children ages 1 to 5 five lack birth certificates or any other official documentation. Children born in rural communities are less likely to be documented than children in urban areas. (20)

There are significant barriers to education in Haiti, especially in rural areas, including the country's extreme poverty, security risks, language barriers, limited availability of teachers, dilapidated school premises, and overall lack of school infrastructure. (10,21) Moreover, because approximately 80 percent of all existing schools are private, most Haitian children are enrolled in private schools that charge tuition and other fees, making education prohibitively expensive for many families. (10,21,22) In addition, estimates show that approximately 10 percent of students drop out of school before grade six and 40 percent before the end of grade nine, making these children more vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (21,23) Another factor limiting access to education is the Ministry of Education's requirement that only children between the ages of 11 and 13 are allowed to transition to secondary school, while over this age limit must integrate into a special group that attends school during the evening. (24,25) However, research did not find evidence that schools provide instruction during the evening for special groups. (26) Research also indicates that less than 14 percent of children with disabilities attend school, with only 3.5 percent of an estimated 120,000 children with disabilities attending school in Port-au-Prince. (19,20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Haiti has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Haiti's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work that does not meet international standards.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Articles 2, 340 513, and 515 of the Labor Code; Article 10 of the Law Organizing and Regulating Labor (27,28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 10, 333–335, 513, and 515 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Act on the Prohibition and Elimination of All Forms of Abuse, Violence, Ill Treatment, or Inhumane Treatment Against Children (Act of 2003) (27,29)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 333–336 of the Labor Code (27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Articles 4, 513, and 515 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Act of 2003; Articles 1.1, 11, 15, and 21 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (27,29,30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 2 of the Act of 2003; Articles 1.1, 11, 12, 15, and 21 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (29,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Act of 2003; Article 281 of the Penal Code; Article 1.1, 11, 12, and 21 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (29-31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 47–51, and 72 of the Law on the Control and Suppression of Illicit Drug Trafficking; Article 2 of the Act of 2003 (29,32)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 268 of the Constitution (33)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 70 of the Penal Code; Article 2 of the Act of 2003 (29, 31)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 23 of the Decree on the Reorganization of the Haitian Education System (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 32.1 and 33 of the Constitution (33)

The Labor Code, which establishes the penalty for violations of the minimum age for work, applies only to workers with a formal employment agreement, a stipulation that does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected under the law establishing a minimum age for work. (27,35) Furthermore, as the minimum age for work is 16, children age 15 are vulnerable to exploitative child labor because they are not required to attend school but also are not yet legally permitted to work. (27,34) It is also unclear whether there is a minimum age for domestic work because the Act on the Prohibition and Elimination of All Forms of Abuse, Violence, Ill Treatment, or Inhumane Treatment Against Children of 2003 (Act of 2003) annulled Chapter 9 of the Labor Code, which set the minimum age for domestic work at age 12. (27,29,35) The labor Code prohibits children under age 18 from working in establishments that sell alcohol and from working at night in industrial enterprises. (28,36) However, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover agriculture, an economic sector in which children are exposed to hazardous substances and to temperatures that can damage their health. (28,35-37) Furthermore, although the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes trafficking for forced labor, servitude, and debt bondage, slavery is not criminally prohibited. (30) Research could not find evidence of any other legal provision criminally prohibiting slavery. Moreover, while Haiti's Constitution establishes the age for compulsory military recruitment at age 18 and sources suggest recruitment materials set the minimum age for voluntary recruitment at that age, research could not find evidence of a law that establishes the age for voluntary recruitment. (3,33,38,39)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MAST)	Enforces laws related to child labor by receiving complaints, conducting investigations, referring cases to juvenile courts, and issuing employment permits to approve certain forms of labor for children between ages 15 and 18. (7,8,28) Develops and implements programs to raise awareness of child labor and provide social services to child survivors of labor exploitation. Its agents at the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (IBESR) perform child protection inspections, which include following up on reported incidents of child labor and are responsible for accrediting residential care centers. (7)
Brigade for the Protection of Minors (BPM)	Investigates crimes involving the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Submits investigations to judicial authorities for criminal prosecution and refers child survivors to IBESR. (7) Housed within the Haitian National Police, maintains 22 offices around the country, including 2 offices along the Haiti-Dominican Republic border. (7)
POLIFRONT	Enforces Haiti's Customs Code and investigates transnational crimes, including child trafficking. (7) Also responsible for referring cases of vulnerable migrants, including minors, to IBESR. Serves as the Border Police Unit of the Haitian National Police. (7) Operates at the border crossings of Ouanaminthe, Anse-à-Pitres, and Malpasse. (9,40,41)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Haiti took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, the government did not provide sufficient data on its labor law enforcement efforts, which limits the ability to assess its efforts.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8,9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Unknown (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (8)

In February 2022, the Haitian government, in partnership with the ILO, Lumos Foundation, and Better Work Haiti, conducted training on preventing forced labor and labor trafficking with focused sessions on the vulnerabilities faced by children living in orphanages and working in the informal sector. This training resulted in the certification of 29 new labor inspectors. (8) However, reporting indicates that the lack of sufficient resources, such as for transportation, fuel, and appropriately equipped workplaces, hampers the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's (MAST) enforcement efforts. This includes the Institute of Social Welfare and Research's (IBESR) capacity to enforce child labor laws by conducting an adequate number of labor inspections. (3,4,7,11) In addition, the prevalence of gang-controlled areas in the country also hampers general law enforcement, including labor law enforcement. (9) According to IBESR, inspectors receive insufficient training overall on child labor issues. (10) Research also indicates that Haiti does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,4,7,11,42,43)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Haiti took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial and human resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (26)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	466 (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	24 (10)	32 (9)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (8)

In 2022, reports indicate that the Brigade for the Protection of Minors (BPM) continued to lack an adequate number of agents, and that training, equipment, transportation, and funding are deficient, all of which hampered BPM's ability to enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (4,6-10,40) However, a referral mechanism between BPM, IBESR, and NGOs is in place to provide reintegration services to survivors of the worst forms of child labor. (3-10,26) BPM also manages the “1-8-8” hotline, which receives notifications of alleged violations related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,44) However, the hotline functions exclusively in Port-au-Prince, which makes reporting cases involving the worst forms of child labor more difficult in rural areas. (6,9,16)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Tripartite Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Develops policies, approves programs, and coordinates, monitors, and evaluates efforts to address child labor in Haiti. (10,26,45) Chaired by MAST and receives technical support from ILO. (10,45) Reports indicate it was active in 2022. (8)

In 2022, the government created the Child Protection Sub-Sector under the direction of IBESR and with the support of UNICEF to improve coordination of child protection issues. (8,9)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a policy related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of the key national policy.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Social Protection and Promotion Policy	Aims to build institutional resilience for social protection and promotion in response to economic shocks and health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiated under a safety net program called <i>Kore Lavi</i> and funded by USAID. (7,46) Consists of four major pillars, including childhood social care and efforts to support employment and employability. Lines of effort under these two pillars include identification and removal of children from work and vocational training for youth, among other activities. (7) Past efforts include the World Bank partnering with MAST and WFP to deliver cash transfers to targeted households, and IDB partnering with WFP and the Economic and Social Assistance Fund to deliver food and cash to vulnerable households in several departments of the country. (7,46) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Special Program of Free Education (PROSGATE)†	Replaced the National Free Education Program. (47) Aims to increase poor children's access to education. Includes school grants intended to eliminate school fees and for accelerated learning programs for students who are behind in school. (48-50) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period.
Providing an Education of Quality in Haiti (2016–2022)	\$30 million World Bank-implemented program that aims to strengthen public management of the education sector; improve learning conditions, and increase enrollment of students in selected public and non-public primary schools. Reporting indicates this program was active in 2022. (51)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of the Republic of Haiti.

Although Haiti has programs that target child labor and its root causes, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in domestic work, agriculture, and child trafficking. (6,7)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Haiti (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that minimum age for work protections apply to all children, including those without formal employment contracts.	2014 – 2022
	Clarify the minimum age for work, including for domestic work.	2009 – 2022
	Adopt a list of hazardous occupations and activities, and ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include work in hazardous agricultural environments.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits slavery.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes a minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military, at age 18 or at age 16, with safeguards for voluntariness.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2021 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age from 15 to 16 so that it aligns with the minimum age for work.	2017 – 2022
Enforcement	Collect and publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including on labor inspectorate funding; the number of labor inspectors; the number of labor inspections conducted; the number of violations found and total penalties imposed and collected; and whether unannounced inspections were carried out.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the number of labor and criminal law enforcement agents, training, and material and financial resources for labor and criminal law enforcement agencies are sufficient to adequately enforce laws related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2022
	Expand the reach of hotlines operated by the Brigade for the Protection of Minors and the Institute of Social Welfare and Research to facilitate reporting of child exploitation cases in areas beyond Port-au-Prince, including in rural areas.	2013 – 2022
	Collect and publish complete information on the number of investigations undertaken, convictions achieved, and penalties imposed related to child labor crimes.	2020 – 2022
	Employ at least 129 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 5.2 million people.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that the National Social Protection and Promotion Policy is implemented.	2017 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure all children are able to obtain birth registration documents and expand access to identity documents to ensure children have access to education and other social protection mechanisms.	2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education and increase accessibility for all children by increasing the number of public schools and teachers, especially in rural areas; improving school infrastructure and safety; ensuring that public schools address language barriers; meeting the specific educational needs of vulnerable populations, including unregistered children and children with disabilities; and ensuring that children who start their education late or repeat grades are allowed to transition to secondary school.	2009 – 2022
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, particularly in domestic work, agriculture, and child trafficking.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that all social programs designed to address child labor are active and fulfilling their mandates as intended.	2019 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, Honduras made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor updated the hazardous work list, which awaits ministerial approval, and held a public expo to raise awareness of child labor. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security also approved the creation of a child labor seal to incentivize the private sector to implement good practices and promote compliance with child labor prohibitions.

In addition, the government replaced the Better Life

Voucher program with the Solidarity Network conditional cash transfer program for families in some of the poorest towns in the country to ensure children stay in school. However, children in Honduras are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. They are also used to carry out illicit activities, including selling and trafficking drugs. Children also engage in child labor in the production of coffee, melons, and lobsters. Labor law enforcement agencies lack the financial and human resources necessary to fulfill their mandates, identifying no child labor law violations in 2022 and decreasing the number of criminal investigations conducted and prosecutions initiated compared with the previous reporting period. Additionally, social programs that aim to address child labor in agriculture have failed to address the problem, and other social programs are needed to address child labor in fishing, mining, domestic work, and forced begging.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Honduras.

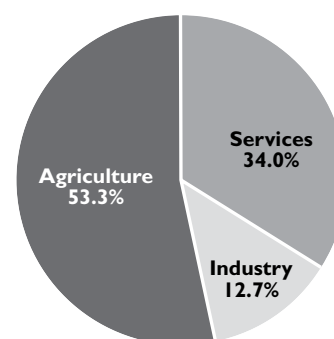
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	9.0 (168,348)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	87.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		80.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM), 2019. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of melon, coffee, corn, and okra (3-8)
	Harvesting shrimp† (3)
	Fishing,† including diving for lobster† (9,10)
Industry	Artisanal mining, † activities unknown (9)
	Construction,† activities unknown(5,6,8-11)
Services	Washing car windows, begging, vending, and performing† on the streets for tips (11,12)
	Scavenging in garbage dumps† (13)
	Domestic work† (5,6,8)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst	Forced labor in fishing, mining, construction, and in the hospitality industry (9)
Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging, street vending, and domestic service (5,6,8,9,14)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,6,8-10)
	Use in illicit activities, including by gangs in committing extortion, and selling and trafficking drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,6,8-11,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

According to Honduras' National Institute of Statistics, 325,499 children between the ages of 5 and 17 were working in 2022, with 62 percent working in rural areas and 41 percent working in agriculture or fishing. (8) These numbers do not incorporate estimates for children used by gangs. (8) Reports indicate that children from indigenous and Afro-descendant groups are particularly vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (8,11) In particular, boys from the Miskito Afro-descendant community are vulnerable to forced labor in fishing, mining, construction, and hospitality industries. (9) Many of these children choose to migrate and, once en route, these migrant children are vulnerable to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (16)







Children in Honduras are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes by family members and friends. (5,8-10) Children are also forced to work as street vendors and domestic servants. Gangs force children to commit extortion, engage in prostitution, transport weapons, traffic drugs, and serve as lookouts. (5,8-10) In addition, Honduras is a destination country for child sex tourists from the United States and Canada. (9)

In 2022, barriers to education in the country continued due to COVID-19 pandemic related school closures and children's lack of access to the internet, cellphone coverage, or technical equipment required to attend virtual classes. (5,6,8) Hurricanes Eta and Iota worsened pandemic related school closures by further damaging infrastructure. (8) Access to education is often limited, especially for children living in rural areas, where there is a lack of funding for schools, and in many cases, limited infrastructure. (11) Reports indicate that in some regions of the country, especially in La Mosquitia, language barriers exist as the teachers do not speak local languages or dialects. (5,8,17) Violence originating from gang activity, including recruitment and territorial disputes, also presents barriers to access for both children and educators, causing some schools to drastically reduce their enrollment. (5,8,10,11) Additionally, children from indigenous and Afro-descendant groups face persistent difficulties in obtaining access to education. (17,18) There is also a particularly high dropout rate among children of indigenous and African descent. (17,18) Finally, children with disabilities attend schools at a lower rate than the general population, and the National Center for Social Sector Information states that 43 percent of persons with disabilities received no formal education. (19) Schools throughout the country have shortages of materials, personnel, and infrastructure. Other Barriers to education include a lack of sanitation and electricity in schools, a lack of transportation to school, and the costs of school fees, uniforms, and supplies. (5,8,10)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Honduras has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Article 120 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 15 of the Executive Agreement STSS-211-01; Article 32 of the Labor Code (20-22)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 and 122 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016 (20,21,23)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016; Article 8 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (20,23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 221 and 222 of the Penal Code (20,24)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013; Articles 219 and 220 of the Penal Code (20,24,25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 219, 220, 257, and 259–262 of the Penal Code (20,21,24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013 (20,21,25,26)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 12 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (20)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (20)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17	Articles 8, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Articles 36 and 39 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence (21,27)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 7, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Article 36 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 171 of the Constitution (21,27,28)

* Country has no conscription (20)

During the reporting period, the government proposed an update to its hazardous work list. This update would expand the list to include domestic work and the production and handling of textile boards, car accessories, harnesses, and electrical circuits. (8) This reform is pending ministerial approval. (8) Despite the minimum working age being set at 18, children in Honduras are required to attend school only up to age 17. This standard makes children age 17 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work without restriction on hours and times of work. (20-22,27)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (SETRASS)	Conducts labor inspections and enforces child labor laws through the General Directorate of Social Welfare and the General Directorate of Labor Inspections. Created by the Labor Inspection Law enacted in 2017 through Decree Num. 178-2016. (5,29,30)
Public Ministry	Carries out criminal prosecutions and directs the investigation of crimes in the country, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (10,31) Through its Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children, prosecutes crimes with child victims, including crimes related to child trafficking, forced labor, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Also coordinates with the National Police to investigate crimes and protect survivors. (10,31) Through its Technical Agency for Criminal Investigations, investigates and provides technical support for criminal prosecutions, including by the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children, such as those related to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and child pornography. (10) Through its Unit Against Trafficking in Persons, Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Illicit Human Smuggling (UTESCTP), coordinates with domestic and international enforcement agencies to carry out anti-trafficking in persons operations and prosecutions. (14,32)
National Police	Investigates crimes related to the worst forms of child labor, through their Police Investigation Directorate. Also works with the Public Ministry and the Directorate of Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (DINAF), as well as other government entities on operations to remove children from child labor. (5)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Honduras took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (SETRASS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3,300,000 (6)	\$3,496,488 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	162 (6)	109 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	14,299 (33)	19,825 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (6)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (6)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (6)	0 (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (8)

The Government of Honduras decreased the size of its inspectorate by 53 following staffing changes related to the start of the new administration and does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (6,8,34) Reports also indicate that additional training on child labor issues is needed for labor inspectors. (33) Despite these gaps, 19,825 labor inspections were conducted in 2022. Of these inspections, 278 inspections were directly related to child labor. (8) This is a high number of inspections conducted by each inspector, and it is unknown whether this high number affects the quality of such inspections. (35) These inspections were carried out in the language spoken by most workers and in the commercial, service, and agricultural sectors. (8) However, the number of inspections conducted is still insufficient to address the scope of labor violations in the country, including child labor violations. (5,6,8,11) Reports indicate that most inspections are conducted in the urban areas of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, leaving rural areas and indigenous communities, in which hazardous activities in agriculture, fishing, and diving are concentrated, with insufficient inspections to address the scope of the problem. (9) Inspectors also do not conduct inspections in the informal

sector unless there is a formal complaint. (5,6,8) In addition, reports indicate that the level of funding and resources for the General Directorate for Labor Inspections is insufficient. (5,8,11) In particular, inspectors did not have sufficient transportation and travel funding to carry out inspections. (6,8,33) Finally, although a reciprocal mechanism exists between labor authorities and social services, there is no evidence to suggest that this mechanism has been used to assist any children. (36)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Honduras took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (6)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	10 (6)	4 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	12 (6)	3 (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	1 (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (8)

Reports indicate that criminal law enforcement agencies in the country have a limited capacity to investigate trafficking in persons cases in most regions of Honduras due to staffing limitations. (37)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor	Coordinates government policies and efforts on child labor issues. Chaired by SETRASS and includes officials from eight government ministries, DINAF, the Supreme Court, and other government entities. (29,38) Oversees regional sub-commissions, led by SETRASS and DINAF officials, which implement national efforts at the local level. (29,38) During the reporting period, the commission reviewed advancements and challenges related to the 2021–2025 Roadmap for the Elimination of Child Labor, voted to approve an updated hazardous work list, and held a public expo to raise awareness about child labor. (8,39) The commission's technical committee met on several occasions with private sector and labor groups to get their input on a revised hazardous work list and review a special compliance seal to incentivize business compliance with child labor laws. The technical committee also met to craft a planning strategy for the commission. (8)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Roadmap for the Elimination of Child Labor in Honduras (2021–2025)	Aims to eliminate all forms of child labor by 2025. Established in 2021 by the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor. (6,8) The plan calls for increased efforts to identify risk factors for vulnerability to child labor; establish a common, integrated protocol for responding to child labor situations; and increase awareness of child labor laws and labor rights. (8) Works at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels and addresses poverty, health, education, and social development. The government continued to support this policy in 2022 by meeting several times throughout the year to review advancements and challenges related to the roadmap. (6,35,40)

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Policy	Description & Activities
Strategic Plan to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Honduras (2016–2022)	Established national priorities to address commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking in four principal areas: (1) prevention and awareness; (2) investigation, prosecution, and punishment of violations; (3) detection, assistance, and protection of victims; and (4) coordination and cooperation. (33,41) During the reporting period, members of the Inter-Institutional Commission against Sexual and Commercial Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons announced the launch of "Blue Hearts", the objective of the program is to spread awareness of human trafficking crimes among government agencies, local committees, the private sector, NGOs, and civil society. This project is guided by the Strategic Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons. (42)
U.S.-Honduras Labor Rights Monitoring and Action Plan	Aims to improve the enforcement of labor laws, including laws related to child labor, by implementing legal and policy reforms, strengthening SETRASS, enhancing enforcement activities, and increasing outreach efforts. (43) USDOL and SETRASS continued activities and coordination during the reporting period. (8) As part of this effort, the USDOL and USDOS continued to finance programs to educate youth who are at-risk of labor exploitation, provide technical assistance for an electronic case management system to improve enforcement of labor laws, and develop a system to detect and prevent child labor in the coffee sector. The Government of Honduras continued to maintain a dialogue with the private sector and labor leaders to address systemic labor challenges. (8)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (44,45)

In 2022, SETRASS introduced a child labor seal to incentivize the private sector to implement good practices and promote compliance with national and international standards for preventing child labor. (8)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Solidarity Network (<i>Red Solidaria</i>)†	Created in 2022 to replace the Better Life Voucher. Consists of a conditional cash transfer of \$163 annually to 350,000 families in some of the poorest towns in the country, with the condition that families vaccinate their children and keep them enrolled in school. (8) The program also includes \$32.4 million in investments in health, education, preventing teenage pregnancy, infrastructure, and housing projects. (8)
Program to Combat Child Forced Begging†	DINAF program that identifies and rescues children who are subjected to forced begging and raises awareness of child forced begging through media. (8) During the reporting period, this program carried out a campaign to assist children living and working on the streets by providing humanitarian aid to families and referring them to the appropriate government services. DINAF also reported providing protection services to children who were being used for street begging. (46) The program also supported a government expo to raise awareness of child labor as part of activities to commemorate International Day Against Child Labor. (8)
Program to Prevent Sex Tourism Involving Children and Adolescents†	Government program that aims to raise awareness and provide training on preventing sex tourism for the tourism industry. The Honduran Tourist Board, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Honduras Tourism Institute jointly implemented this program. (8, 11) The Honduran Tourism Institute and the Ministry of Tourism participated in a 3-day training on preventing sexual exploitation in travel and tourism. (8)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Honduras.

Although the Government of Honduras funds or participates in social programs to address child labor, research did not identify programs to assist children working in sectors such as fishing, mining, and domestic work, or that address the illegal recruitment of children into gang-related activities. In addition, social programs that address child labor in agriculture do not appear to sufficiently address the scope of the problem. (33)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Honduras (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the compulsory education age from 17 to 18 to align with the minimum age for work.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Carry out labor inspections in areas in which child labor is prevalent, such as rural areas, the informal sector, and indigenous communities in which children engage in hazardous activities.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that labor and criminal law enforcement agencies have sufficient funding and transportation to carry out their mandates nationwide.	2010 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 109 to 278 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 4.2 million people.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that all labor inspectors receive sufficient training on child labor issues to effectively carry out their duties.	2014 – 2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement information on the training for criminal investigators and penalties imposed related to the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the referral mechanism is being used by the labor inspectorate to refer children to the appropriate social services.	2022
	Ensure the number of inspections conducted by labor inspectors is appropriate to ensure the quality and scope of inspections.	2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education by increasing funding to schools; ensuring that teachers speak local languages or dialects; building more schools, particularly secondary schools, and schools in rural areas; enhancing efforts to protect students from gang recruitment and violence; ensuring children with disabilities have access to schooling; and removing barriers such as school fees, costs for uniforms, and lack of transportation.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that social programs reach the children who are most vulnerable to child labor, including children of African descent and indigenous children.	2017 – 2022
	Expand social programs that address child labor in agriculture and create programs to assist children engaged in child labor in fishing, mining, domestic service, and illicit gang activity.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, India made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Railway Protection Force launched a nationwide campaign that intercepted 183 children from human trafficking perpetrated on trains and in railway stations. In Haryana, the police department removed 1,760 children from child labor, while the Haryana state Anti-Human Trafficking Unit reunited 378 child trafficking victims with their families. Additionally, from April 2021 to March 2022, the National Child Labor Project Scheme removed and rehabilitated 13,271 from child labor. However, children in India are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in garment production, stone quarrying, and brickmaking. Existing hazardous work prohibitions do not include all occupations in which children work for long periods in unsafe and unhealthy environments, and penalties for illegally employing children are insufficient to deter violations. Reports of corruption at varying levels among police and other government officials, leading to the mistreatment of victims and delayed prosecutions of child labor offenses remained a concern. Children continue to experience commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse in shelter homes that operate without sufficient government oversight. In addition, the Government of India continued to restrict foreign donations to NGOs, many of which work on human and child rights issues, through an amendment to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. The authorities sometimes used the threat of cancelling or revoking this Act to silence or restrict civil society organizations that might be working to address human rights concerns, including the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in India.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	1.4 (3,253,202)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	90.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	0.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		97.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Sample Survey Round 68 (NSS-R68), 2011–2012. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including ploughing land; producing hybrid cottonseed and vegetable seeds; cultivating cotton and rice; harvesting sugarcane, tea, coconut, eucalyptus, and ginger; and performing peripheral work, such as removing weeds (3-7) Processing sugarcane, cashew nuts,† and seafood (3,8,9)
Industry	Manufacturing garments, weaving silk fabric and carpets,† producing raw silk thread (sericulture), spinning cotton thread and yarn, and embellishing textiles with silver and gold (zari)† (4,6,10-12) Quarrying and breaking sandstone† and granite,† producing bricks,† and mining and collecting mica† and coal† (4,6,7,13-14) Polishing gems† and manufacturing glass bangles,† imitation jewelry, locks,† and brassware† (4)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Rolling cigarettes (<i>bidis</i>)† and manufacturing incense sticks (<i>agarbatti</i>), fireworks,† and matches† (4,15)
	Manufacturing footwear and bags; producing leather goods and accessories,† fans, and toys; and stitching soccer balls (4,16)
Services	Domestic work† (4,6,17)
	Working in restaurants, hotels, food service, and tourism services (4,7,18)
	Street work, including scavenging, sorting garbage, selling trinkets, and organized begging (4,6,7)
	Working in automobile workshops and repairing vehicles (4,10,13,19)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in agriculture, including producing hybrid cottonseed, cultivating rice, and harvesting sugarcane (6,7)
	Forced labor in producing bricks, quarrying stones, and in rice mills (6,7,20)
	Forced labor in producing garments and carpets, spinning cotton thread and yarn, and embroidering silver and gold into textiles (<i>zari</i>) (11,18,21)
	Forced labor in producing bangles, imitation jewelry, leather goods, toys, fans, plastic goods, footwear, and bags (6,16,22,23)
	Forced labor in domestic work and begging (4,6,24)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,6,7,24)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (6,10,25)
	Use in illicit activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, including the use of children to commit theft, traffic other children, and recruit other children for commercial sexual exploitation (4,26,27)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor are typically from marginalized groups, such as low-caste Hindus, members of tribal communities, or religious minorities. (7,28) Human traffickers fraudulently recruit Nepali, Bangladeshi, and Burmese girls into commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in India. (6,29) Both registered and unregistered spas also exploit girls in sex trafficking, as the government lacks sufficient oversight of such establishments. (6,30,31) Despite rescue operations by authorities, trafficked children are vulnerable to exploitation in some of Tamil Nadu's 7,000 garment and spinning factories, where the state has yet to implement an effective inspection system. (6) In addition, children are forced to work as bonded laborers alongside their families in brick kilns and stone quarries to pay off debts owed to moneylenders and employers. (6,7) Non-state armed groups reportedly recruit children as young as age 14 for use in direct hostilities against the security forces of Jammu and Kashmir. (6,32,33) In addition, Maoist groups sometimes use children as human shields in confrontations with security forces, and commanders of non-state armed groups recruit girls for sexual exploitation, including practices indicative of sexual slavery. (34,35)

Children have limited access to education, particularly in overcrowded urban slums, due to budgetary constraints and a lack of separate and sanitary washrooms for girls, adequate infrastructure, and transportation. (10,13) Furthermore, children from marginalized groups may face additional barriers to accessing education, including discrimination and harassment by education officials. (13,36,37) Lower-caste children in some schools are segregated in classrooms, sometimes resulting in higher dropout rates. (13,38) The Government of India does not collect or publish data on child labor. (13,18)



II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

India has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor (Cont.)

Convention	Ratification
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations to address child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in India's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of comprehensive child trafficking prohibitions.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 3(1) of the Child and Adolescent Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act (39)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 3A of the Child and Adolescent Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (39)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Schedule to the Child and Adolescent Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act; The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (40,41)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2(g), 4, and 16–19 of the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act; Sections 367, 368, 370, 371, and 374 of the Penal Code; Section 79 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (42-44)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Sections 366A, 366B, 370, and 372 of the Indian Penal Code; Sections 2, 5, 5A, and 5B of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act; Article 23 of the Constitution (43,45,46)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 366A, 366B, 370A, 372, and 373 of the Indian Penal Code; Sections 4–6 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act; Sections 13–15 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act; Section 67B of the Information Technology Act (43,45,47,48)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 76, 78, and 83(2) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act; Sections 15–18, 20–23, and 32B(c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act (42,49)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Codified Military Rules (50)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 1(2) and 83 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (42)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14	Section 3 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (51)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 3 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (51)

* Country has no conscription (52)

India's hazardous work regulations for children ages 14 to 18 do not include sectors in which children are known to work for long hours, including spinning mills, garment production, and carpet making. (4,40,53) The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code (OSH) has not been adopted at the state level and the deadline for state-level adoption remains unknown. (41,54) Furthermore, the OSH Code covers only establishments with 10 or more employees, factories with 20 or more employees, and manufacturing facilities

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with 40 or more employees, leaving workers in smaller workplaces unprotected. (41) India's child trafficking laws do not meet international standards as they require the use of force, fraud or coercion to establish child sex trafficking offenses. (45) Although sources report that the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into India's Armed Forces is age 16 and that individuals must be age 18 to be deployed, research could not identify these criteria in Indian law. (55,56)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
State Government Labor Ministries	Conduct labor inspections, including inspections for child labor, and assess penalties for violations. (7) Also refer children to Child Welfare Committees for protection and rehabilitation services. (42)
State and Local Police	Enforce laws pertaining to the worst forms of child labor. (53) Submit information to District Magistrates to determine whether a case should be prosecuted in District Court. (7) Also refer children to Child Welfare Committees for protection and rehabilitation services. (42) The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) (also referred to as the "Crime Branch") is a unit of the police force in each state. There are 36 CIDs across India. (52,57)
Trafficking Enforcement Bodies	The National Investigation Agency investigates and prosecutes international cross-border human trafficking cases. (18,24,55,58) In February 2022, the Ministry of Home Affairs reported 696 state- and district-level Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU) in India, with 75 in Uttar Pradesh alone. AHTUs manage the 24-hour Helpline No. 011 for reporting cases of human trafficking, although there were likely fewer functional AHTUs with allocated budgets. (45,59) During the reporting period, the government of Puducherry announced the establishment of an AHTU. (60) Although the state of Andhra Pradesh issued an order to establish 10 AHTUs in 2020, these AHTUs have yet to be established. (61) In April 2022, the National Commission for Women (NCW) launched a unit to improve anti human-trafficking responses and build the capacity of AHTUs. (60) Research was also unable to determine whether there are AHTUs in other states. (38,61) Sources indicate that only 27 percent (271) of AHTUs across India are fully functional, with 32 percent existing only on paper. (38,62,63) A lack of financial resources and adequately trained staff also hinder the effectiveness of AHTUs. (58,64) Police officers assigned to an AHTU reportedly view these positions as undesirable; as a result, some are occupied by near-retirees or officers with poor performance records. (6,38) Anti-Human Trafficking Cells (AHTCs) provide intelligence gathering on human trafficking cases; each AHTC consists of an Assistant Commissioner of Police/ Deputy Superintendent of Police, inspector, and sub-inspector. (57,65)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in India took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of state-level labor inspectorates that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of human and financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (41)	Yes (41)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (41)	Yes (41)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (7)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (7)

The Government of India did not provide information about its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (7) Research indicates that training for labor inspectors is inadequate, and the number of labor inspections carried out is insufficient to meet the demands of India's workforce of over 523.8 million people. (7,64) NGOs also note that the time between when a complaint is received and when a labor inspection is conducted is too long. (7,10,18,66) While penalties for hiring children under the age of 14 include imprisonment up to 2 years and fines up to \$700, this has not deterred employers from hiring children. Furthermore, labor inspectors do not impose the maximum permissible penalty amount. (7,18,39,67) National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) data indicate that convictions related to child labor violations also remain low. (68) Despite government efforts, in 2022, authorities documented corrupt practices such as official misconduct and bribery at various levels of government, contributing to widespread impunity on alleged trafficking cases. (69,70)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in India took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws, including low prosecution rates and an environment of impunity.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (38)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)

The Government of India did not respond to requests for information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for this report. (7) However, the Railway Protection Force removed 151 boys and 32 girls from railway trafficking hotspots in 2022. (71) The Haryana police department also released 1,760 children from exploitative labor, while the Haryana Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) reunited 378 trafficked children with their families. In addition, the Odisha police department arrested 65 suspected traffickers and identified 707 survivors, including children. (72,73)

India's prosecution rate for suspected traffickers was significantly lower with relatively low convictions than in previous years, although the government convicted more traffickers for bonded labor. (38,60) According to the NCRB, courts completed trials in only 12 percent of cases and convicted merely 16 percent of the defendants whose trials reached conclusion. (74) In 2022, 90 percent of cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) courts remained pending. (75-77) Twenty-six states, except Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, have not adhered to the prescribed case completion time period of 1 year. State authorities also report that judges and prosecutors at POCSO courts sometimes do not have training or expertise in addressing child sex crimes. (35) To address this, state governments and NGOs in Tamil Nadu provided competency training to public prosecutors in 2022. (6,60,78) In addition, four states implemented child-friendly procedures in courtrooms, including some that allowed victims to testify via video conference. (6) However, some victims refused participation in trials due to inadequate implementation of victim protection measures and lack of legal assistance. (21)

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There is a lack of public information about how many prosecutions and convictions involve child victims. (74) Moreover, as child sex traffickers increasingly use electronic means to reach buyers and receive payments, eliminating the need to operate in physical locations, such as brothels, apprehending perpetrators has become more challenging for law enforcement officials. (21,24,79) Public prosecutors and local law enforcement sometimes accepted bribes to influence trafficking prosecutions and arrests. (60) There are also incidences of police alerting human traffickers of forthcoming law enforcement operations and refusing to file reports against accused officials. (6,24,57) In Assam, West Bengal, and Jharkhand, police were ordered by state officials to register human trafficking cases as kidnapping cases to reduce the official number of human trafficking cases. In addition, some victims of human trafficking across the country faced mistreatment from the police, and some authorities arrested, fined, penalized, and deported some child trafficking survivors for crimes their human traffickers compelled them to commit. (6) Though banned in 1988, the *jogini* system, in which girls as young as age 12 from some the lower castes are married to a local deity and used as sex slaves, is still prevalent in some parts of India. (65,80) Enforcement of laws prohibiting this practice is rare. (81)

There is insufficient enforcement of the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, including a lack of prosecutions and proper victim identification. (13,44,57,82) Case acquittals are common due to inadequate preparation, court backlogs, and a lack of prioritization. (68,83,84) In addition, local and state politicians avoided prosecution for holding workers in bonded labor in agriculture or brick kilns by leveraging their political connections. (6,13,21,57) While some states have standard operating procedures to assist survivors of bonded labor and the worst forms of child labor, other state governments lacked similar procedures and did not issue release certificates or provide adequate financial assistance to bonded labor victims without significant advocacy from NGOs. (6,24,59) Children were rarely classified as bonded labor victims due to lack of identity documents and inconsistent testimony. (6) Moreover, the penalties assessed for bonded labor crimes were insufficient to deter violations. (6) Reports also indicate that employers trap more than 60 percent of survivors back in bonded labor after they are freed. (6)

A dearth of investigations into human trafficking crimes and the sexual and physical abuse of human trafficking victims at government-run and private shelters has reportedly encouraged a sense of impunity for shelter employees. (6,85,86) Moreover, some human trafficking survivors remained in state-run shelters for an extended time due to a lengthy repatriation process, further exacerbating their vulnerability. (6,85,86) In addition, staff members lacked proper training to recognize signs of abuse and to alert the authorities. (6) Research was unable to determine whether programs to protect children from physical and sexual abuse in shelter homes have since been implemented.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Labor Coordinating Bodies	The Task Force to Implement the Child Labor Act (CLA) coordinates implementation of child labor laws, led by the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE), and comprises 12 officials from the federal and state governments. (87) This task force met twice in 2022 to issue instructions to states on the implementation of the CLA. (7) MOLE also instructed states to input child labor enforcement data into a common portal, PENCIL. (60) The Central Advisory Board on Child and Adolescent Labor also monitors the implementation of existing legislation and programs related to child labor. Chaired by MOLE and comprises 45 board members, including government officials and NGO representatives. (88) The board met once in 2022. (7)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of action by some states to establish action plans to eliminate child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy on Child Labor	Aims to address child labor and includes specific activities for the provision of assistance to children. (89) Overseen by MOLE and the Ministry of Women and Child Development. (18,57,90,91) In 2022, actions taken under this policy have provided services to help rehabilitate thousands of children from child labor. (10,50)
National Plan of Action for Children	Identifies priority actions for achieving the objectives set out in the National Policy for Children, including age-appropriate classes for children released from child labor and child trafficking. (18,92,93) Seeks to develop community-based prevention, identification and release procedures, victim services, and reintegration mechanisms, and strengthen institutions to address the worst forms of child labor. (92,93) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Plan of Action for Children during the reporting period.
State Action Plans on Child Labor	Exist in only 11 out of 28 states and Union Territories: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. (50,56,59,94) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement these state action plans during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs to eliminate child labor (Table 10). However, gaps persist in these social programs, including the exclusion of government-run, government-funded, and privately-run shelter homes that provide assistance to survivors of the worst forms of child labor.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
National Child Labor Project (NCLP) Scheme†	MOLE program that operates at the district level to identify working children, removed them from hazardous work, and provide them with education and vocational training. (4,90) Comprised of approximately 3,000 NCLP Special Training Centers (STCs) with approximately 120,000 children who receive support such as stipends, meals, and health checkups. (90) From April 2021 to March 2022, during the pandemic, the NCLP program removed 13,271 children from child labor and provided services to victims, a decrease from 58,289 releases from the previous reporting period. (7,10) The decrease is due to the merging of the scheme with the Department of Education's <i>Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan</i> (SSA, or Comprehensive Education Campaign) towards the end of 2022. (7) In March 2022, the government discontinued the STCs and encouraged states to send former child labor victims to local schools. Observers note that since the closures of the STCs, many children have re-entered the labor market as local schools cannot accommodate all released children and do not provide the aftercare services that child laborers require. (95,96)
Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Laborers‡	MOLE program that provides released bonded laborers with financial assistance and social protection services. (90) Supports funding of surveys at the district level on the prevalence of bonded labor. (97) In 2022, the government increased the compensation for bonded labor survivors from USD \$125 to \$375. (7,98,99) However, research was unable to determine whether this program has effectively provided services to former bonded laborers. Recent media reports suggested that as of April 2022, some released bonded laborers have yet to receive compensation. (100)
Anti-Human Trafficking Activities‡	Ministry of Women and Child Development-operated anti-human trafficking activities, in collaboration with NGOs and state governments. (101) Support projects to help reintegrate, provide services, and repatriate human trafficking survivors, including children, through the <i>Ujjwala</i> and <i>Swadhar Greh</i> projects. (101) In 2022, the Ministry of Women and Child Development merged the <i>Ujjwala</i> and <i>Swadhar Greh</i> schemes in the <i>Shakti Sadan</i> scheme, with is an integrated relief and services project. These homes have provisions for shelter, food, clothing, and primary health. (60) Observers have reported that government supported trafficking shelters have not received adequate funding and many have been operating at a deficit. (102) Due to unsafe conditions coupled with alleged abuse by caretakers, authorities reported multiple instances in 2022 in which children ran away. (6)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of India.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.

In 2022, the District Legal Services Authority helped 280 children working in brick kilns join schools under the new initiative *Ek Adhera Se Ujale Ki Aur* ("From Darkness Towards Light"). (103) The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) also developed a new protocol to assist Child Welfare Committees in repatriating children in need of care back to their families. (104) Moreover, the NCPCR identified and provided aftercare services to 20,000 street children in 2022. (105)

The Government of India continued to restrict some foreign donations to NGOs, some of which work on human and child rights issues in India, through enhanced enforcement of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). (102,106,107) Research was unable to determine how the FCRA amendment has impacted organizations that provide services to children, including child labor survivors. However, reports indicate that the

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government is using the FCRA to decline or cancel registrations, which makes operating in the country illegal, as well as to silence and restrict civil society organizations from working to address human rights concerns that the Indian authorities perceive as critical of the government. (102,107,108)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in India (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children under age 18 include sectors in which children work in unsafe and unhealthy conditions for long periods of time, such as in spinning mills, garment production, carpet making, and domestic work.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that India's child trafficking laws do not require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking.	2022
	Publish the legal instrument that establishes the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into India's armed forces.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Employ at least 34,922 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 523.8 million people.	2021 – 2022
	Collect and publish national-level data on labor law enforcement, including the amount of funding for the labor inspectorate, the number of labor inspectors, the number and type of inspections conducted, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure adequate training for labor law inspectors and criminal law investigators.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that law enforcement officials investigate child labor crimes and register police complaints in a timely manner, including for cases involving bonded labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that penalties are consistently imposed for violations related to child labor, including the worst forms of child labor, to meaningfully deter violations, and ensure that a reciprocal referral mechanism exists between criminal authorities and social services.	2021 – 2022
	Collect and publish national-level data from all state governments on criminal law enforcement efforts, including trainings for criminal investigators, the number of criminal investigations, the number of violations found, the number of prosecutions initiated, and the number of convictions.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the Anti-Human Trafficking Units are fully established.	2019 – 2022
	Enforce laws related to bonded labor and labor trafficking under the Bonded Labor System Abolition Act and ensure that survivors are properly compensated in accordance with the law.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that bonded labor cases are fast tracked and that state governments issue release certificates and provide financial assistance for bonded labor victims, including full compensation for those freed from bonded labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that law enforcement officials who mistreat human trafficking survivors or delay registering human trafficking cases, face proper disciplinary action.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that all the states in India adhere to the 1-year timeline for prosecution mandated for crimes covered by the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.	2022
	Increase prosecution rates for human trafficking cases and seek appropriately stringent sentencing following convictions.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that politically connected individuals on the local and state levels face prosecution for holding agricultural and brick kiln workers in bonded labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that public officials who facilitate or participate in the worst forms of child labor are held accountable, including officials who accept bribes in exchange for protection from the law.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that there is implementation of survivor protection measures in courts and ensure that judges and prosecutors at Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act courts have adequate training or expertise on crimes involving the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2020 – 2022
Ensure laws prohibiting the practice of the <i>Jogini</i> system is adequately enforced.	2022	
Investigate suspected abuses and misconduct at government-run and government-funded, and privately-run shelter homes, and ensure that all shelter homes are registered and subject to adequate oversight, have mechanisms in place to protect children from physical and sexual abuse, and that all staff members receive adequate training on how to recognize and report signs of abuse.	2018 – 2022	

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Encourage states and territories that do not currently have action plans for the elimination of child labor to establish such plans.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Plan of Action for Children, and the State Action Plans on Child Labor and publish results from activities undertaken to implement these plans.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that enforcement actions, coordination efforts, policies, and programs are informed by publicly available data.	2022
	Ensure equitable and broad access to education, including for children from lower-castes, provide adequate financial resources for remote learning assets and penalize education officials who engage in discrimination and harassment of children.	2014 – 2022
	Reduce barriers to education, in particular for refugee children and children from marginalized communities, by providing sufficient training for teachers, providing separate and sanitary washrooms for girls, and increasing the number of available schools, especially in urban slums where inadequate infrastructure options limit access to education.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that data on exploitative child labor is collected and findings made available to the public, including findings from district-level bonded labor surveys and raw data from the national census.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that children removed from child labor situation receive adequate aftercare services and are prevented from re-entering the labor market.	2022
	Ensure that shelters are safe and not operating as hostels by providing accommodations to non-survivor guests.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure the impact of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act on civil societies working to address child labor exploitation is minimized.	2022
	Ensure that funding for human trafficking shelters is adequate and released in a timely manner.	2022

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In 2022, Indonesia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, together with the United Nations Children's Fund, launched the Prevention of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse program, a 3-year partnership in response to a report on Indonesian children being victims of online sexual

exploitation. The Ministry of Manpower also increased funding for the labor inspectorate from \$12.2 million in 2021 to \$15.1 million in 2022, and increased its number of labor inspectors by 267, for a total of 1,570. However, children in Indonesia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in plantation agriculture, including in palm oil and tobacco production. Despite increases in funding and inspectors in 2022, the Ministry of Manpower continues to lack the financial resources and personnel necessary to fully enforce child labor laws throughout the country. In addition, Indonesia's prohibitions against child trafficking are inconsistent with international law because the Law on the Eradication of the Criminal Act of Trafficking in Persons requires that a demonstration of threats, the use of force, or coercion be established for the crime of child trafficking to have occurred.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Indonesia.

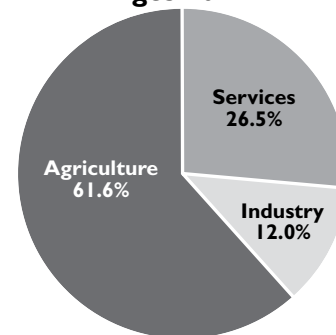
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	3.7 (816,363)
Attending School (%)	10 to 14	92.4
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	2.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Labor Force Survey (SAKERNAS), 2010. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting of palm oil, including growing, fertilizing, cutting, spraying, collecting, and loading palm oil fruits† (3-9)
	Planting, watering, harvesting, and applying fertilizer to tobacco, and curing, tying, and carrying tobacco leaves into storage units in the post-harvesting phase† (9-12)
	Planting seeds, spreading fertilizer, and spraying weed poison† at a eucalyptus plantation (13,14)
	Production of rubber† (10)
	Fishing, including on fishing vessels, in processing facilities, and on offshore platforms† (8,9,15-17)
Industry	Mining,† including gold, tin, and sand (10,18,19)
	Construction,† activities unknown (9,11,16,20)
	Production of footwear (11)
	Production of woven fabric, rattan-based bags, pottery, and other goods (12)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including working as sidewalk food vendors, begging, busking, street performing, and other unknown activities (17,18,21)
	Horse jockeying (9,10,22,23)
	Domestic work (8,16)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,9,24,25)
	Forced domestic work, fishing, and mining (8,9,11,16,18,20)
	Use in illicit activities, including the sale, production, and trafficking of drugs, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9,11,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children are subjected to forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation, both domestically and abroad. (8-10,16,18,24) During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia closed its borders to foreign tourists and limited domestic tourism, which may have had an effect on reducing the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation by Indonesians and foreigners. (10) Meanwhile, perpetrators are increasingly using online and social media platforms to recruit victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and to coerce children to engage in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts. (9,26,27) The pandemic kept many children at home with no access to school services, and perpetrators may have used this opportunity to target minors with access to the internet and more unsupervised time. (24)




Children working in tobacco farming and on agricultural plantations, including palm oil and rubber plantations, are exposed to hazardous working conditions. (4,8,12,28,29) Children on palm oil plantations are often recruited by family members to help adult laborers meet harvest quotas, which sometimes results in children working long hours into the night or dropping out of school. (3,5-7,10) Children in the city of Bima, on the island of Sumbawa, work as horse jockeys and face a number of health and safety hazards, including the risk of bone injuries and fatal falls. In addition to safety concerns, participation in horse racing may impact school attendance. (22,23)

The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP)'s 2020 Indonesian Children's Profile report, the most recent source of government child labor data, is missing data for child laborers ages 5 to 10. (30) The ILO's findings based on the National Workforce Surveys (SAKERNAS) from 2011–2020 data reveal a decreasing trend for child labor in Indonesia, but further studies are needed to determine the impact of the pandemic on child labor. (31) However, research indicates that not all government ministries are using the most recent child labor data to inform programs. (8,10) Although the Act on the National Education System mandates free education, schools impose additional fees on students to cover items such as books, uniforms, transportation, and other non-tuition costs, which may hinder the ability of students, particularly those from low-income families, to attend school. (32,33) Refugee children, and Indonesian children without proper birth documentation or a government-sponsored identification card, face a barrier to accessing education, because Indonesia's formal education system is only accessible to citizens and individuals with officially granted residency. (8,30,33,34) In addition, children with disabilities report high rates of non-registration, and therefore may also face similar challenges. (35)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Indonesia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Indonesia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including insufficient prohibitions against child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Law on the Ratification of ILO C. 138; Article 69 of the Manpower Act (36,37)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 74 of the Manpower Act; Article 2 of Ministerial Decree on Jobs that Jeopardize the Health, Safety, or Morals of Children (37,38)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Annex F of Ministerial Decree on Jobs that Jeopardize the Health, Safety, or Morals of Children (38)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 74 of the Manpower Act; Articles 1–6 and 17 of the Law on the Eradication of the Criminal Act of Trafficking in Persons; Article 83 of the Law on Child Protection (37,39,40)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 1–6 and 17 of the Law on the Eradication of the Criminal Act of Trafficking in Persons; Article 83 of the Law on Child Protection (39,40)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 74 of the Manpower Act; Articles 81 and 82 of the Law on Child Protection; Section 3 of the Law on the Ratification of the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography; Articles 4–12 and 37 of the Law on Anti-Pornography; Article 297 of the Penal Code (37,40-43)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 74 of the Manpower Act; Articles 67, 78, and 89 of the Law on Child Protection (37,40)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes		Article 28 of Law on the Indonesian National Armed Forces (44)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 28 of Law on the Indonesian National Armed Forces (44)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 3(d) of Law on the Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (45)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 48 of the Law on Child Protection; Articles 6 and 34 of the National Education System Act (32,40)
Free Public Education	No		Articles 12, Section 2(b), and 34 of the National Education System Act (32)

Indonesia's prohibitions against child trafficking are inconsistent with international law because the Law on the Eradication of the Criminal Act of Trafficking in Persons requires a demonstration of threats, the use of force,

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or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking. (39,40) Although Indonesia does specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken and limits the number of hours for light work, it does not list activities in which light work may be permitted. The types of hazardous work prohibited for children also do not cover horse jockeying, a type of work in which there is evidence that Indonesian children are exposed to physical dangers. (38) In addition, although the National Education System Act provides for free basic education, Article 12, Section 2(b) of the Act also requires students to pay prescribed fees unless those fees are waived. (32)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Manpower (MoM)	Through the Directorate General of Labor Development and Supervision, enforces the country's labor laws relating to child labor through labor inspections and formulates policies, standards, norms, guidelines, and mechanisms on labor inspections. Provides information to employers on child labor laws and regulations and works with law enforcement officials to prosecute child labor violators. (46) Through the Directorate of Norms Supervision of Women and Child Workers, responds to complaints of child labor by telephone, fax, or e-mail. Refers children found during inspections to the local Women's Empowerment and Family Planning Body or to the Integrated Service Center for Empowering Women and Children for appropriate social services, coordinated by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA). (8)
Indonesian National Police, including Women and Children's Service Unit	Handle investigations involving child trafficking. (8) Conduct inspections and raids, and make arrests in response to crimes, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (47)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Indonesia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Manpower (MoM) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$12.2 million (10)	\$15.1 million (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	1,503 (10)	1,570 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (37,48)	No (37,48)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	12,419† (10)	14,627 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (10)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (10)	N/A (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (10)	N/A (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (48)	Yes (48)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	No (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (8)

† Data are from January 2021 to September 2021.

As the law in Indonesia treats child labor as a criminal offense, labor inspectorates may initiate investigations for violations related to child labor, which may result in prosecutions and criminal penalties. (37,48) Child labor cases are investigated by MoM civilian investigators who collect evidence and prepare information that is passed to the Attorney General's Office for subsequent prosecution. (18)

During the reporting period, MoM conducted 14,627 labor inspections in 12,280 worksites, including child labor inspections in 11 palm oil companies, and did not find any instances of child labor in the formal sector; however, labor organizations and MoM officials suspect child labor violations occurred. (8) Indonesia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. Officials at MoM disclosed that there are insufficient inspectors to cover all formal workplaces, and MoM continued to rely on community-based monitors and neighborhood chiefs to report incidences of child labor. (8,18,34,49,50) Despite the budget increase, officials noted that funds are insufficient to cover office infrastructure, transportation, and fuel for vehicles, which hampered labor inspectors' ability to carry out inspections. (8)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Indonesia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (10)	No (8)
Number of Investigations	3 (24)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (24)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	2 (24,51)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	2 (24)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (8)

The Indonesian National Police's Criminal Investigation Division maintains an informal database of cases involving child trafficking. However, these statistics are not comprehensive of all child trafficking crimes or other worst forms of child labor and reports of the number of violations found and prosecutions initiated do not specify whether they were for the worst forms of child labor offenses or human trafficking offenses. (24) The government does not have a centralized system for aggregating information on criminal law enforcement information related to child labor and its worst forms and lacks the resources to consolidate data in a central database. (8,24) The decentralized nature of criminal law enforcement data and voluntary reporting by precincts may have contributed to the underreporting of criminal law enforcement information related to the worst forms of child labor. (10,47)

The anti-trafficking task forces at the national, provincial, and local levels continue to lack sufficient funding to conduct investigations and carry out their mandate according to the government's anti-trafficking in persons policies and regulations. (9)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key coordinating mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI)	Monitors the implementation of the Child Protection Law and child protection policies and provides recommendations on child protection framework to the President of Indonesia. (40) Includes the MoWECP; MoSA; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology; the Ministry of Health; Ministry of Agriculture; the Ministry of Law and Human Rights; the Indonesian National Police; and the National Narcotics Agency. (52) During the reporting period, KPAI conducted activities related to child rights and protection, including releasing a number of cases relating to violation of children's rights and issuing recommendations to local and regional governments and ministries relating to child protection and rights fulfillment. (53)

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V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan of Action (NPA) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2002–2022)	Provided a policy framework for the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms. (54) Specific activities conducted during the third phase of the NPA included developing a set of recommendations with international and local NGOs, increasing awareness-raising and advocacy efforts, and integrating child labor in formulating sectoral policies and regulations. Established a program to create a series of industrial zones free of child labor, as well as the National Movement for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor to integrate the issue of child labor as the government develops sectoral policies and programs. (10) During the reporting period, MoM raised awareness on child labor through forum discussions and webinars, and participated in discussions with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights to draft policies on child labor in the tourism sector. MoM is currently reviewing the NPA for next steps, as it expired during the reporting period. (8)
Roadmap Toward a Child Labor-Free Indonesia in 2022 (2014–2022)	Supported the implementation of the NPA for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Aimed to mainstream the elimination of the worst forms of child labor into relevant national policies; strengthen coordination between stakeholders at the national, provincial, and district levels; and enhance the capacity of stakeholders to eradicate child labor. (55) During the reporting period, the government continued to disseminate recruitment guidelines for employers, labor unions, and companies, as well as education and empowerment programs designed for low-income families. (8) The government is reviewing its Roadmap Toward a Child Labor-Free Indonesia, which expires during the reporting period, with a focus on programming in rural areas. (31)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (18,56)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including education-related fees for children to attend school.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Child Trafficking Services†	Provide social rehabilitation and shelter services for child survivors of human trafficking. Led by MoSA and other government agencies. (8,16) During the reporting period, the government allocated \$67 million for social rehabilitation programs. (8)
Cash Transfer Programs†	Provide conditional cash transfers to help with formal and informal education opportunities and health expenses for vulnerable groups, including street children, abandoned children and infants, children facing criminal charges, children with disabilities, the poorest families, and child laborers who dropped out of school. Includes the Healthy Indonesia Card (<i>Kartu Indonesia Sehat</i> , KIS) for 100 million Indonesians who are struggling to meet basic needs, thereby reducing the risk of child labor; the Smart Indonesia Program (<i>Kartu Indonesia Pintar</i> , KIP), a card that provides educational grants to all school-age children whose families have a Family Welfare Card or meet eligibility criteria covering both formal and informal education; Child Social Welfare Program (<i>Program Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak</i>), which provides conditional cash transfers to children; Family Welfare Card (<i>Kartu Keluarga Sejahtera</i>), which provides a bank account and consolidates all financial assistance programs, including children's education and health funds, for low-income families; and the Family Home Program (<i>Program Keluarga Harapan</i> , PKH), which provides conditional cash transfers for children's education to the poorest 5 percent of households. (8,34,35,47) During the reporting period, the government continued its cash transfer programs, including providing KIP cards to 17.9 million students from poor families and allocating \$2.04 billion for the PKH program, which provided services to 10 million beneficiaries. (8)
Education Programs†	School Operation Assistance (<i>Bantuan Operasional Sekolah</i>) grant program, funded at IDR 51.6 trillion (approximately US\$3.48 billion) during the reporting period, compensates schools for the loss of income from waiving school fees for poor and vulnerable children in primary, junior secondary, and senior high schools. (8,53) Minimum Service Standards of Basic Education Program improves access to quality public education by limiting the distance of primary and junior secondary schools from children's households, specifying minimum teacher-student ratios, and identifying minimum teacher education qualifications. (57) Community Learning Centers provide education for children of migrant palm oil workers. (16) Research was unable to determine whether the Minimum Service Standards of Basic Education Program or the Community Learning Centers were active during the reporting period. (53)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Indonesia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (35,58)

During the reporting period, the MoWECP and UNICEF launched the Prevention of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse program, a 3-year partnership in response to key findings from a report by UNICEF, Interpol, and ECPAT, which found that 500,000 children between ages 12 and 17 reported being victims of online sexual exploitation between November 2020 to February 2021. (26)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Indonesia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that threats, the use of force, and coercion do not need to be established for the crime of child trafficking to be proven.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children include sectors in which child labor is known to occur, including jockeying in horse racing.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor law's light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be permitted for children.	2020 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education by removing provisions that permit schools to charge fees.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectorate funding is sufficient to cover office infrastructure, transportation, and fuel requirements to enable labor inspectors to carry out inspections.	2018 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 1,570 to 9,047 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 135.7 million people.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors have the legal authority to conduct inspections in the informal sector, including on private farms and homes, in which child labor often occurs.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that all criminal law enforcement personnel receive adequate training on child labor regulations and relevant criminal laws.	2017 – 2022
	Strengthen the inspection system by conducting unannounced inspections.	2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement information, including the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and penalties imposed for violations relating to child labor, including its worst forms.	2009 – 2022
	Provide resources to collect and centralize national data on child labor, making reporting by precincts mandatory, and specifying to which child labor crimes the collected data refers.	2022
	Sufficiently fund the anti-trafficking task forces at the national, provincial, and local levels to conduct investigations and carry out their intended mandates.	2016 – 2022
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the types of labor activities carried out by children, including in the construction and street work sectors, to inform social policies and programs.	2014 – 2022
	Collect and publish prevalence data on child laborers between the ages of 5 and 10.	2019 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education, including ensuring that all children are able to obtain a government-sponsored identification card so they can attend school.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the most recent source of government child labor data is used consistently across all ministries to inform programs.	2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Minimum Service Standards of Basic Education Program and make information about implementation publicly available.	2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Community Learning Centers and make information about implementation publicly available.	2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Iraq made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs' Child Labor Unit identified 109 children under the age of 15 engaging in child labor and 604 children under the age of 18 working in hazardous conditions, although it is unknown whether these children were provided with social services after they were identified. Despite this effort, Iraq is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. During the reporting period, Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Government authorities inappropriately detained or punished children allegedly affiliated with ISIS—some of whom were victims of forcible recruitment or use. Children in Iraq are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced begging. The government also did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. In addition, it continues to lack social programs that focus on assisting children involved in child labor, including demobilizing and reintegrating child soldiers.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Iraq. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	78.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of dairy products (3,4) Fishing, activities unknown (3)
Industry	Construction, † activities unknown (5) Making bricks, including transporting bricks and working in kilns (3,6-8) Working in factories, producing glass, household cleaners, paint, steel, garments and textiles, perfume, and electrical materials, and recycling plastic (6-8)
Services	Street work, including selling goods, pushing carts, cleaning cars, and begging (6,8-11) Working at gas stations† and auto repair and other shops (6) Working in landfills, scavenging and collecting garbage† and scrap metal (7,12) Domestic work (6) Working in hotels, restaurants, bars, nightclubs,† and brothels (6,9,10)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including cross-border smuggling and drug and weapons trafficking (3,6,8-10,13-15) Forced domestic work (6)

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced begging (3,13,16-19)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,6,13,16-21)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (22)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.



There is evidence that child labor in brickmaking in Iraq is widespread. (3,6,7) Brickmaking exposes children to hazardous working conditions such as high heat, polluted air, exposure to the sun, and carrying heavy loads. (7) These children often lack protective equipment and are sometimes housed on the factory compound. (7) Reporting indicates that the Kurdistan Workers' Party and ISIS recruited and used children in armed conflict in 2022. (22) Girls were also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation through temporary marriages. (14,20) Iranian-aligned militia groups have profited from and protected "marriage offices" operated by clerics who facilitate the commercial sexual exploitation of children through "temporary marriages." (14,16,18) In addition, Syrian girls from refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region were sometimes forced into early or temporary marriages with Iraqi or other refugee men; some Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) authorities allegedly ignored or accepted bribes to ignore such cases, including those in which girls were sold multiple times. (14) Research found that women and girls in IDP camps whose family members have alleged ties to ISIS endure sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and abuse by armed actors residing in the camps, security and military officials, and camp personnel controlling access to humanitarian assistance and services. (17)

Children in Iraq face numerous barriers to accessing education, including displacement, the lack of local schools, the use of schools as shelters by IDPs, costs of transportation and school supplies, and the lack of sufficient educational facilities. (3,5,10) Sources report severe teacher shortages in Sinjar district as the result of teachers being displaced. (3) Insufficient access to transportation and destruction of schools during the conflict with ISIS also continued to limit access to education; according to UNICEF, over half of the schools in Iraq require repairs. (3) Children of parents whose marriages were informal due to the woman being a minor, some displaced persons, and some children with suspected ties to ISIS lack identification documents required for school enrollment. (3,23,24) Displaced children and refugee children are especially vulnerable to educational barriers, including the cost of transportation and school supplies, the lack of documentation, and host community children being given priority for classroom seats. (3) Secondary and higher education systems sometimes refuse to accept students who previously studied at schools that used the Latin rather than Arabic alphabet; many of these students drop out as a result. (3) Children with special needs had limited access to education due to a lack of specialized teachers and school infrastructure. (3) UNICEF reports that, while almost 92 percent of children enroll in primary schools, only half of children from economically disadvantaged families complete primary school and less than a quarter complete secondary education. (25)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Iraq has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor (Cont.)

Convention	Ratification
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Iraq's and the KRG's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the requirement that force, fraud, or coercion be present for child trafficking crimes.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 7 of the 2015 Labor Law (26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 95 of the 2015 Labor Law (26)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 95 and 98 of the 2015 Labor Law; Ministry of Labor's Instruction 19 of 1987 (26,27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 9 and 11.2 of the 2015 Labor Law (26)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 1 and 6 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking (28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 399 and 403 of the Penal Code (29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 6(2) of the CPA Order 22 (30)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No	12‡	Articles 8.1.1 and 11.1 of the Education Law; Article 1.3 of the Law on Compulsory Education (31,32)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 34.2 of the Constitution; Article 9 of the Education Law (31,33)

* Country has no conscription (30)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (31,32)

Article 117 of the Constitution of Iraq recognizes Kurdistan, which comprises the provinces of Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Halabja, as a federal region. (33-36) Article 121 grants the Kurdistan Region the right to exercise legislative, executive, and judicial powers. (33) The Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament must endorse any laws that the Government of Iraq passed after 1991 for such laws to enter into force in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. (34-36) Under the Iraqi Education Law and under the Law on Compulsory Education, children are required to attend primary school for only 6 years, which is typically up to age 12. (31,32) This leaves children ages 12 to 15 particularly vulnerable to child labor, because they are not required to be in school, yet they are not legally permitted to work. (37) However, in Kurdistan, compulsory primary education is 9 years, typically to age 15, in accordance with international standards. (50)

In Iraq, Article 1 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking requires force, fraud, or coercion to be present as an element to constitute the crime of child sex trafficking, which is inconsistent with international standards, including Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol. (28) As the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament endorsed the Iraqi Law to Combat Human Trafficking, the human trafficking standard in the Kurdistan Region is also not in compliance with international standards. (38) In addition, while the KRG's laws meet international standards for the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation under Articles 91.3(b), 91.4, and 97 of the 1987 Labor Law, Iraq's laws do not prohibit the use of children in prostitution and do not clearly prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of children

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for the production of pornography or pornographic performances. (27,29) Furthermore, Iraq's laws do not prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, while the KRG prohibits such use under Articles 91.3(c), 91.4, and 97 of the 1987 Labor Law. (27) Moreover, Iraqi law does not prohibit recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA)	Enforces child labor laws and regulations through its Child Labor Unit. (10) Conducts research on child labor through its Childhood Welfare Authority. Receives complaints of child labor cases. (10) The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) MOLSA (KMOLSA) also enforces child labor laws and regulations. (10)
Ministry of Interior	Enforces criminal laws on the worst forms of child labor. Collaborates with MOLSA, the Iraqi Industries Federation, and the Confederation of Trade Unions to conduct inspection campaigns. (10) Maintains a hotline for victims of human trafficking, with calls routed directly to the Ministry's Anti-Trafficking Directorate. (10) KRG's Ministry of the Interior also enforces child labor laws and regulations, investigates cases of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and includes a Counter Trafficking Directorate. (10,38)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Iraq took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and the KRG's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (KMOLSA) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (6)	713 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (6)

In 2022, MOLSA's Child Labor Unit conducted 328 inspections throughout the country. Additionally, MOLSA identified 109 children under the age of 15 engaging in child labor and 604 under 18 years old. (8) It is unknown if or how MOLSA or other agencies supported these children after they were identified. MOLSA officials have stated that enforcement of child labor laws remains weak and ineffective due to insufficient penalties to deter violators. (8) Although the number of labor inspectors is unknown for 2023, 2019 reporting indicates that Iraq employed 98 labor inspectors. (8) Research indicates that Iraq does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (6,39,40)

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KMOLSA did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. Reporting indicates that KMOLSA and the KRG's Ministry of Interior were responsive to complaints of child labor in the Kurdistan Region but would only conduct child labor inspections in response to a complaint. (6,8) KMOLSA indicated that funding is insufficient to carry out its duties. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Iraq took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inadequate and ineffective planning for prosecutions.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (6)

In 2022, authorities continued to inappropriately detain or punish children allegedly affiliated with ISIS—some of whom were victims of forcible recruitment and use. (14,22,41-45) The government also did not investigate or hold anyone criminally accountable for allegations of unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. (14,19) Some victims of human trafficking, including children who were forcibly recruited and used, are punished for unlawful acts their traffickers compelled them to commit. (14,36,46) In addition, an NGO reported that police occasionally detained children engaged in street begging and kept them in custody before releasing them; police did not screen these children as possible victims of human trafficking or refer them to appropriate protection services. (9,14)

Although the Ministry of Interior has reported in the past that it investigated police officers for involvement in sex trafficking, research indicates that security and management personnel in IDP camps continue to be complicit in the sexual exploitation and trafficking of girls. (6,13) Moreover, research indicates that children are sentenced to up to 8 years in prison for prostitution, rather than being treated as victims of trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children. (47) Additionally, the government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coordination among agencies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interministerial Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates overall government efforts to address child labor, researches policies regarding child labor, and designs and manages projects. Members include representatives from MOLSA and four other ministries. (9) The committee does not sufficiently coordinate among agencies to effectively process cases of children suspected of having ties to ISIS or children who are victims of human trafficking. (8) However, the committee continued to coordinate with the UN to address grave violations of children's rights in 2022. (8)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including covering all worst forms of child labor, including forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Child Protection Policy (2017–2022)	Outlined a comprehensive approach to addressing child protection, including addressing child labor through prevention, protection, and rehabilitation programs, such as a poverty alleviation initiative and educational and mental health services. Included a component to provide rehabilitation and reintegration activities for children previously engaged in armed conflict and children who experienced trauma during the period of ISIS occupation. (10,48) The policy did not specifically cover other worst forms of child labor present in Iraq, including forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation. (48)
National Plan on Combating Human Trafficking in Iraq	Aims to address human trafficking by outlining steps to be taken by authorities represented on the Central Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Focuses on prevention, protection, prosecution, and regional and international cooperation, and includes considerations for child victims. (49)

Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement these policies during the reporting period. Additionally, research was unable to identify any child labor policies in the Kurdistan Region. (6)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Informal Education†	Government-supported informal education systems, including evening school programs and accelerated education that encourages children ages 12 to 18 who have dropped out of school to continue their education. (10) Research was unable to determine what steps were undertaken in 2022 to implement this program.
Conditional Subsidies Program†	Provides assistance to low-income families for children to stay in school and out of the workforce. (6) Active in 2022. (8)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Iraq.

The Government of Iraq did not provide protection services to demobilized child soldiers of ISIS or the Popular Mobilization Forces in 2022. Failing to reintegrate former child soldiers leaves them vulnerable to re-victimization or re-recruitment into armed groups. (46) Likewise, research was unable to find evidence of specific active programs to support children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation or other worst forms of child labor, including child soldiering. Existing programs do not sufficiently address the lack of access to education in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Government-run shelters are reportedly unable to house child victims, sending them to MOLSA orphanages instead, due to a lack of funding and suitable accommodations. (19,47)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Iraq (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the laws comprehensively prohibit child trafficking in all parts of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, and do not require force or coercion for their application, in accordance with international standards.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child in prostitution and the use, procuring, and offering of a child for the production of pornography and pornographic performances.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law in Iraq criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2013 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age of 12 years in Iraq to age 15, the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that children are not arrested, detained, tortured, or denied services on the basis of their or their family members' perceived ties to ISIS.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that armed groups that recruit and use children are held criminally accountable.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that allegations of sexual exploitation and trafficking of girls in IDP camps by government officials are investigated and those responsible are held criminally liable.	2019 – 2022
	Publish labor law enforcement information, such as labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, number of labor inspections conducted at worksite, number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, whether routine inspections and targeted inspections were conducted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2011 – 2022
	Employ at least 690 labor inspectors to provide adequate coverage for the labor force of approximately 10.3 million people and ensure adequate funding to enforce legal protections against child labor.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that children who are victims of trafficking are not imprisoned and are granted access to social services providers and humanitarian assistance.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that routine labor inspections are carried out in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators receive training on child labor and that they have sufficient resources to carry out their duties.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that children picked up by authorities for begging are screened for trafficking indicators.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement on the worst forms of child labor in Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.	2013 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Interministerial Committee on Child Labor effectively coordinates among agencies to process cases of children suspected of having ties to ISIS or children who are victims of human trafficking.	2022
Government Policies	Renew the Child Protection Policy in Iraq and adopt a child labor policy in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region for other worst forms of child labor present in Iraq, including forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Implement programs to ensure that children are discouraged from enlisting in armed groups and receiving military training.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that universal access to education is consistent with international standards, including for refugee and internally displaced children and children with special needs, and that programs address barriers to education, including the lack of teachers, the destruction and lack of local schools, costs of transportation and school supplies, and lack of infrastructure, especially during school closures. Ensure that the lack of identification documents does not hinder access to education, including for IDPs and refugees, children with suspected ties to ISIS, and children born of “informal” marriages.	2013 – 2022
	Implement programs to address child labor in relevant sectors in Iraq, such as the provision of services to children in commercial sexual exploitation, to demobilize and reintegrate children engaged in armed groups, and to provide informal education programs and shelters for human trafficking victims.	2009 – 2022

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[http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/751/Coalition Provisional Authority Order No.89.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/751/Coalition%20Provisional%20Authority%20Order%20No.89.pdf)

In 2022, Jamaica made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security increased the number of labor inspections from 1,679 in 2021 to 2,319 in 2022. It also drafted a new policy to reduce child labor through 2027 that awaits Cabinet approval. In addition, the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons signed a cooperation agreement with government departments and NGOs to collect and report national human trafficking data. However, children in Jamaica are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and use in illicit activities. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and street work. Jamaica's laws do not provide higher penalties for using, procuring, or offering children for the production and distribution of drugs than penalties imposed for these same crimes when the victims are adults. Moreover, the law providing for free basic education does not meet international standards because free education is only guaranteed for Jamaican citizens.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Jamaica.

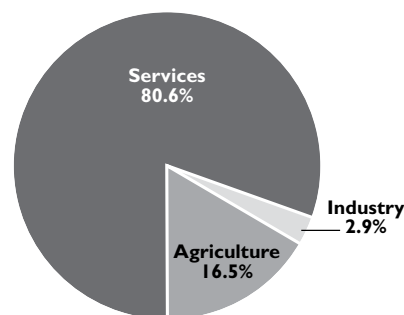
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	6.2 (30,111)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	98.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	7.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		85.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Jamaica Youth Activity Survey (SIMPOC), 2016. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming,† activities unknown (3,4)
	Fishing, activities unknown (3)
Industry	Construction (3)
Services	Working in shops and markets (4,5)
	Domestic work (4,5)
	Street work, including begging† and vending (4-6)
	Wholesale and retail (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,7,8)
	Forced domestic work (4,6,7)
	Use in illicit activities, including executing financial scams, recruitment into criminal organizations, and serving as drug and gun couriers (4,5,7)
	Forced begging (4)
	Forced work in shops and markets (4)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Children in rural areas are more likely to work than their urban counterparts; they are also more likely to work longer hours and to engage in hazardous work. (3) Some young boys and girls from rural areas who are sent to live with more affluent family members or acquaintances become victims of forced labor in private households, markets, and shops. (4) Some children from Jamaica are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, particularly in or near the tourist attractions of Negril, Montego Bay, and certain urban areas of Kingston. (4,5) Cases may involve girls from poor urban and rural households trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation in brothels, nightclubs, massage parlors, and strip clubs. Recently, victims have been lured by traffickers who advertise false jobs on social media or in newspapers. (4,5,9) Girls, immigrant children, LGBTQI+ youth, children from poor families, and children from rural areas are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking. (4,8,10,11) Of the LGBTQI+ youth exploited in commercial sex, many were children fleeing their families or communities in fear of persecution or bullying. (4) Children also continue to be recruited by criminal organizations to engage in illicit activities, such as gang violence, drug and gun smuggling, and financial fraud, including lottery scamming when criminals contact victims abroad and allege a processing fee must be paid to claim a large cash prize. (4,7,8,11) In 2022, the suspected perpetrators in child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation cases identified by authorities were most often family members or other caretakers of the victim. (4,9)

The cost for transportation, food, books, and uniforms creates barriers to education for some children. (12) Although the Jamaican government has unified all post-primary schools, an unofficial division remains and government officials and education professionals in Jamaica reported a significant divide between traditional high schools and non-traditional secondary schools, in which the latter purportedly left students without adequate education, training, and certification, perpetuating a cycle of poverty. (4,5,9) While access to primary education is guaranteed, reports indicate that some children with disabilities received no education, particularly in rural areas without adequate transportation and facilities, or when parents chose not to send their children. (4,9) Truancy officers in Jamaica have not been active for several years. (9) In late 2021, UNICEF reported that schools lost contact with approximately 120,000 Jamaican students due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. (4,8) As of December 2022, over 3,000 students remained unaccounted for and are believed to have started working or become involved in criminal activities. (4,8)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Jamaica has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Jamaica's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including failure to sufficiently criminalize the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 34(1) and 36 of the Child Care and Protection Act (13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 34(3) and 36 of the Child Care and Protection Act (13)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 34(3)(b), 39, and 41 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Section 55 of the Factories Act: Docks (Safety, Health and Welfare) Regulations; Section 49(2) of the Factories Act: Building Operations and Works of Engineering Construction Regulations; Section 18 of the Mining Act (13-16)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2, 4(1)(a), and 4(2)–4(9) of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) Act; Section 2 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment (Amendment) Act, 2021 (17,18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 10 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Sections 2, 4, and 4A of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) Act; Section 2 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment (Amendment) Act, 2021 (13,17,18)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 2, 4, and 4A of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) Act; Sections 18, 21, and 36 of the Sexual Offences Act; Sections 3 and 4 of the Child Pornography (Prevention) Act (17-20)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Section 4 of the Criminal Justice (Suppression of Criminal Organizations) Act (21)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 18(2) of the Defense Act (22)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Sections 28 and 89 of the Child Care and Protection Act (13)
Free Public Education	No		Section 13(k) of the Jamaican Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (23)

* Country has no conscription (17)

Jamaica allows children ages 13 to 14 to engage in light work but has not determined the specific light work activities and hours permissible to facilitate enforcement. (5,13) Jamaica also does not sufficiently prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children because the law does not specifically criminalize the use of a child for prostitution. (17-20) In addition, the laws related to the use of children in illicit activities do not specifically include higher penalties for perpetrators who use, procure, or offer a child for the production and distribution of drugs. (13,24) Furthermore, the law does not criminally prohibit military recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups. Jamaica also does not meet the international standard for free public education as free education is only guaranteed for Jamaican citizens, leaving those without citizenship vulnerable to child labor. (23) Moreover, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (13)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS)	Enforces and administers child labor laws through the labor inspectorate, in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. (25) Responsible for policy development as well as the management of government agencies involved in child labor enforcement. (4,9) In 2022, its Child Labor Unit trained approximately 85 inspectors and social workers on MLSS's Standard Operating Procedures, which outline how to identify, report, refer, and treat suspected cases of child trafficking and child labor. (8) MLSS also organized outreach sessions on child labor and labor trafficking through workshops with key populations and vulnerable groups. (8)
Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)	Investigates, through the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Vice Squad (A-TIP Vice Squad), cases of child trafficking including forced child labor, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities in which human trafficking is involved. (8,25) The A-TIP Vice Squad has over 250 officers and leads operations and case management activities for human trafficking cases. In 2022, the A-TIP Vice Squad conducted operations in areas at high risk for commercial sex. (8) Through the Center for the Investigation of Sexual Offenses and Child Abuse, investigates sex crimes against children and educates the public about these crimes. (25) Authorized to assess penalties when child labor violations are found. (4) Receives referrals of suspected child labor law violations and other abuses for criminal enforcement from the Ministry of Education and Youth, Child Protective and Family Services, and the MLSS. The Ministry of National Security, through the JCF, is the only government body with the power to conduct arrests. (4)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Prosecutes cases involving the worst forms of child labor. (26) Receives referrals of suspected child labor law violations for possible prosecution from the Ministry of Education and Youth, Child Protective and Family Services, and the MLSS. (4)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Jamaica took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3,200,000 (5)	\$3,500,000 (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	39 (27)	41 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (13,28)	Yes (13,28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A (5)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	1,679 (5)	2,319 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (5)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (5)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (5)	0 (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (4)

Research indicates that Jamaica does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (29,30) Inspectors are not allowed to enter and inspect private residences; however, labor inspectors may coordinate visits with social workers who are allowed to enter private residences and are trained to watch for indicators of child labor. (5) Inspectors do not have authority to assess penalties, but if a labor inspector observes a suspected child labor violation during an inspection, the case is referred to the MLSS Child Labor Unit for investigation and possible referral for legal action through the courts. Fines and penalties can be levied or collected upon summary conviction in court. (4) NGO leaders point to a lack of new initiatives and programming, staffing issues, and budgetary shortfalls within relevant government institutions as negatively impacting efforts toward the elimination of child labor. (4)

In 2022, the labor inspectorate employed 41 inspectors and an additional 111 social workers. The MLSS reported that 85 members of its staff, including some labor inspectors, received refresher training on child labor and human trafficking, with the primary goal of the training being identification of child labor violations. (4) Labor inspections were conducted at formal and informal worksites including shops, factories, port facilities, and construction sites. During the reporting period, child labor investigations primarily focused on drinking establishments where teenage girls are known to work exceptionally long hours and be denied their pay; however, the government identified no child labor violations. (4) In 2022, the MLSS implemented a new General Compliance Inspection Form to enable greater volume and standardization in inspections. (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Jamaica took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	28 (5)	60 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	3 (5)	7 (4)
Number of Convictions	2 (5)	1 (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (5)	No (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (4)

The Government of Jamaica made progress in prosecuting human trafficking cases, as the criminal justice sector increased investigations across the island and nearly doubled its prosecutions from the previous year. Key ministries, departments, and agencies developed and implemented counter-trafficking procedures to improve victim identification and referral services. (8) In 2022, the government reported that 202 police officers and 95 other enforcement officials received trafficking in persons training, including training on child labor violations. (4) Various government agencies, often in partnerships with NGOs, offered training on identifying human trafficking victims and on the National Referral Mechanism for child trafficking. (8)

Based on referrals from the National Children's Registry, the government conducted 36 investigations into potential child trafficking cases during the reporting period. In March 2022, authorities arrested a suspected trafficker and four alleged clients in a case involving a child under age 16 working in a bar who was exploited in sex trafficking; the pimp was prosecuted and convicted and was awaiting sentencing at the close of the reporting period. (4,9) The clients were also prosecuted. In 2022, the government opened three new Child-Friendly Spaces for interviewing and assisting suspected victims and participated in trainings for criminal justice professionals and social services providers who may come into contact with child trafficking victims. (9) The government also identified six additional victims of child labor crimes, including commercial sexual exploitation, and placed them in state care where they received counseling, mental health screening, and educational support. In contrast, law enforcement authorities detained and imprisoned children for alleged participation in illegal activities, including violent crimes and involvement with gang activities; it did not screen all of those children for trafficking victimization. (4) In addition, an NGO reported that not all cases of child abuse were routinely screened for signs of human trafficking. (8)

Jamaica's Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons (ONRTIP) reported several law enforcement challenges, including the use of evolving social media tactics by perpetrators, difficulties in getting survivors to self-report, child victims who become adults and no longer want to pursue cases in court, the lengthy judicial process, attrition rates of investigators and prosecutors, and financial and human resource constraints. (4,8) During the reporting period, ONRTIP developed a TIP Data Capacity Assessment of Ministries,

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Departments, and Agencies to create a more objective reporting system on human trafficking in Jamaica. It also signed a Cooperative Agreement with government departments and NGOs that allows ONRTIP to routinely collect, analyze, and report high-quality data on human trafficking. (8)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor	Provides leadership and guidance on policies and programs aimed at reducing and eliminating child labor. Partners with the MLSS Child Labor Unit and National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons (NATFATIP), a multi-agency body comprising various ministries, departments, agencies of government, and representatives of three NGOs. (4,8) Conducted interventions and engagement sessions geared toward children living in high-risk communities, virtual sensitization sessions for government workers and municipal children's clubs, and outreach to teenagers at a symposium for those considering the transition from school to work. (4)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to adequately address child labor, including a lack of implementation of a new national child labor plan.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan of Action for Combating Trafficking in Persons	Identifies objectives, actions, and responsible agencies to prevent and eliminate human trafficking, including commercial sexual exploitation of children and forced child labor, through prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships. (12,31) Guides the activities of NATFATIP. (8) Though the plan expired at the end of 2021, the government reported it continued to guide NATFATIP's activities. (9)
National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence (NPACV)	Provides a coordinated and structured approach to addressing the key issues and challenges pertaining to child violence and abuse. (32) Outlines a range of strategies and programs that will be implemented over 5 years across multiple stages in a child's life. The NPACV is implemented, monitored, and evaluated by an Inter-Sectoral Committee on Children and Violence. (6) The government continued to support and implement this policy during the reporting period, including the launch of Project Birthright, an initiative to provide free birth certificates to undocumented Jamaicans, especially vulnerable children. (4,9,33)

During the reporting period, the MLSS drafted a new 2022–2027 roadmap, the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor in Jamaica, to reduce child labor. However, this roadmap has not yet been implemented, as it is awaiting full approval by the Cabinet. (4)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Program for Advancement through Health and Education† (PATH)	Government of Jamaica and World Bank-funded conditional cash transfer program launched in 2002 that helps reduce child labor by requiring participants to attend school at least 85 percent of the academic days in a month. (5,25,34,35) The MLSS expanded PATH payments to more than 150,000 students and payments in 2022 totaled approximately \$38.3 million. The government provided additional benefits in the form of nutritional assistance and funding for school supplies totaling more than \$13.3 million. (4)
Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor (2022–2025)	An intergovernmental cooperation platform made up of 30 countries, with active participation of employers' and workers' organizations. (36) Seeks to declare Latin America and the Caribbean as the first developing region free of child labor by 2025. Drawing on the knowledge, experience, and accumulated capacity of key public and private actors, aims to address the persistence of child work. (37) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
U.S.-Jamaica Child Protection Compact Partnership (CPC Partnership) (2018–2022)	A 4-year plan partially funded by the U.S. Government that enhanced the efforts of the Government of Jamaica to address child trafficking. (10) In 2022, opened three new Child-Friendly Spaces to support survivors and participated in trainings for criminal justice professionals and social services providers who may come into contact with child trafficking victims. (4)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Jamaica.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4)

The government conducted 14 awareness-raising sessions and 5 outreach workshops on child labor and human trafficking, mostly in the high-risk communities of Kingston and Montego Bay, that reached an estimated 1,200 community members. (4) In addition, the MLSS Child Labor Unit launched a video competition for students to produce short video monologues discussing their feelings about child labor in Jamaica. Child Labor Unit personnel also conducted workshops for students and teachers in Portland and Trelawny, parishes identified by the Child Labor Risk Identification model as being at particular risk for increases in child labor, that facilitated discussions on strategies to combat child labor. (4) Furthermore, the government participated in the Angel Watch program that facilitates information sharing on individuals attempting to enter the country who have been charged with sexual offenses. (8) Although Jamaica funds education-related social programs, current resources are insufficient, and social programs do not fully address the scope and magnitude of the problem. (11) Research found no evidence of programs designed for children working in agriculture or street work, or for those subjected to commercial sexual exploitation.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Jamaica (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws include higher penalties for the use of children in the production and distribution of drugs.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that legislation criminally prohibits the use of a child for prostitution.	2021 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2021 – 2022
	Establish by law that free basic public education is available to all children, regardless of citizenship.	2021 – 2022
	Pass legislation that will determine the specific light work activities and hours permissible for children ages 13 and 14 to facilitate enforcement.	2014 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 41 to 88 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 1.3 million people.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that initiatives and programming, staffing levels, and the budget for agencies, including the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, are sufficient to identify child labor violations and fulfill their mandates.	2022
	Ensure that children, including those participating in illicit activities and victims of child abuse, are adequately screened for indicators of human trafficking, including forced labor.	2022
Government Policies	Increase the integration of child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing and future policies.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the roadmap developed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security aimed at reducing child labor is implemented.	2022
Social Programs	Ensure that social programs adequately address child labor, including in street work, commercial sexual exploitation, agricultural work, and other worst forms of child labor, particularly in rural areas.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that school costs, such as uniforms, books, food, and transportation, do not diminish access to free public education, including for students at traditional and non-traditional schools.	2017 – 2022
	Implement a program to report, identify, and find missing children who may have been forced into child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in farming and fishing to inform policies and programs.	2021 – 2022

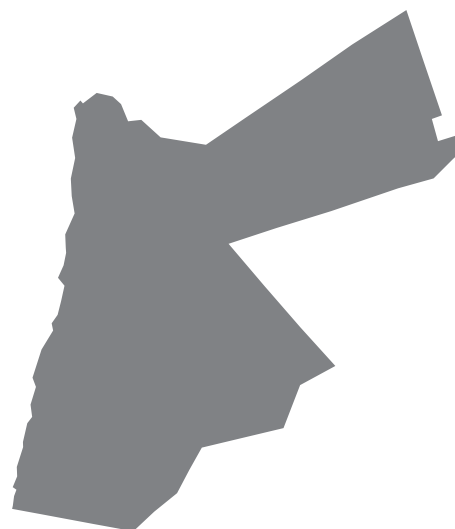
Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure that children with disabilities, particularly in rural areas, have access to an education, and resume visits by officers to ensure attendance.	2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor and make information about such measures publicly available.	2022

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In 2022, Jordan made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government amended the Penal Code to increase penalties for enabling or encouraging a child under the age of 16 to beg or collect donations, including imprisonment of not less than 2 years for forced child begging. The government also investigated 42 cases involving the use of children in the production and trafficking of drugs and updated the National Framework for the Reduction of Child Labor, extending it to 2030. However, children in Jordan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Moreover, Syrian children still face barriers to accessing education due to socioeconomic pressures, bullying, and the costs associated with transportation and supplies, among other issues. In addition, the scope of government programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of child labor, including in construction and street vending.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Jordan.

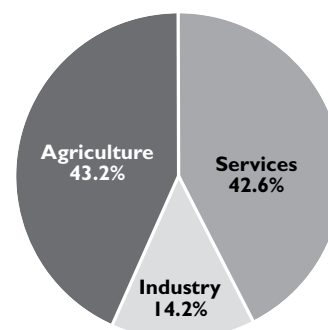
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	1.0 (33,182)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	1.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		80.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Child Labour Survey (SIMPOC), 2016. (2)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including weeding, planting, spraying pesticides, applying fertilizer, and harvesting tomatoes and olives (3-8)
Industry	Mining† and quarrying† (4,7)
	Construction,† including building and painting homes (4,6-8)
	Manufacturing, including packing (4,7-9)
Services	Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles† (3,4,6,8,9)
	Driving animals to transport tourists (10)
	Street work,† including vending (3,9,11,12)
	Scavenging scrap metal and waste† (7,13,14)
	Begging (3,11,15)
	Domestic work† (9)
	Food services, including working in restaurants and bakeries and selling coffee (4,7-9)
	Hotel services† (4,7,9)
	Working in retail, including cleaning shops (3,4,7)

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (8,16,17)
	Forced begging (3,8,11,15,18,19)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,20,21)
	Forced labor in agriculture (21)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.






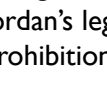
The majority of children working in Jordan are engaged in the agricultural and services sectors. (7) In agriculture, children perform tasks such as weeding, planting, and harvesting on non-industrial scale farms and are exposed to hazardous conditions. (3,7,22) In the services sector, children work in small retail shops, auto-repair shops, domestic work, and street work, such as peddling goods. (3) Children in Jordan are also subjected to forced labor in agriculture, forced begging, and use in illicit activities. (21) Sources indicate that, rather than attending school, Syrian refugee children are sometimes forced to work alongside their families in agriculture and the services industries. (6,18,23) In addition, child beggars are sometimes used to sell drugs. (16) In the one reported case of commercial sexual exploitation, the children were trafficked by their mother. (8)

In 2022, Jordan once again waived a requirement for identity documentation to expand access to education for Syrian children for the 2022–2023 school year. (8) The government provided double-shift schools to address overcrowding, with Jordanian children attending in the morning and Syrian children in the afternoon. (3,17,23,24) However, both Jordanian and Syrian children attending double-shift schools were vulnerable to child labor because school hours are considerably shorter, and fewer school hours leave more time for work. Despite a government guarantee of equality of access to education, children still sometimes face *de facto* barriers to education, including bullying and harassment, and the costs of transportation, uniforms, and school materials. (3,14,23,25,26) In addition, children of Jordanian mothers and non-Jordanian fathers, as well as non-Jordanian children who do not belong to refugee groups, lack access to public education. (17)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Jordan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Jordan’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibitions related to the military recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 73 of the Labor Code (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 74 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Ministerial Order of 2011 (27,28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Ministerial Order of 2011 (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 3(a) and 3(b) of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 3(a) and 8–11 of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 298, 299, 306, 310, 311, 315, and 319 of the Penal Code; Articles 3(a) and 3(b) of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (29,30)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 8 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (31)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Article 5(b) of the Military Service act; Article 13(b) of the Officer's Service Act (32,33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 3(a) of the National Service Act (34)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 141 of the Penal Code (30)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 7(a.2) and 10(b) of the Education Act (35)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 10(a) of the Education Act; Article 20 of the Constitution (35,36)

In 2022, the government amended the Penal Code and increased the penalty for enabling or encouraging a child under the age of 16 to beg or collect donations to a period of no less than 3 months imprisonment and not more than 12 months for the first offense, and no less than 6 months and not more than 12 months for subsequent offenses. The amendment also specifies imprisonment of not less than 2 years for forcing a child under the age of 16 to beg or collect donations. (8) Additionally, the amended Penal Code now stipulates 2-year minimum prison sentences for forced begging in cases that do not reach the legal threshold to be prosecuted under the human trafficking law. (8)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL), Central Inspection Directorate	Enforces labor laws, including those on child labor. Identifies cases of child labor through worksite inspections and registers instances of child labor in a National Child Labor Database, which allows ministries to monitor and track children as they are identified and referred to social services. (37) Maintains a hotline, website, and mobile app to receive labor-related complaints, including complaints of child labor. (13,17) The hotline has operators during office hours, although operators who speak foreign languages were not always available. The hotline has an automated message recording after 3 p.m. (38,39) The phone number is difficult to locate and, based on available information, operators rarely responded to voicemails left after working hours. (38,39)
Public Security Directorate, Criminal Investigation Unit	Investigates and prosecutes violations of the Penal Code, including allegations of the worst forms of child labor. Operates a section to combat human trafficking. (13,21)

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Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Joint Anti-Trafficking Unit of MOL and the Public Security Directorate	Investigates cases of human trafficking and forced labor, refers cases for prosecution, and coordinates with foreign embassies to identify victims of human trafficking and, when needed, to repatriate foreign workers. (23)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Jordan took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$353,107 (3)	\$423,000 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	170 (3)	172 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (27)	Yes (8)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	71,686 (3)	37,741‡ (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	923 (3)	374 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	97 (3)	98 (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	98 (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (8)

‡ Data are from January 1, 2022, to October 31, 2022.

In 2022, MOL facilitated training for its labor inspectors and officials in the inspections and complaints department on trafficking in persons. (40) However, research indicates that Jordan does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (8,41) Additionally, the high number of inspections per inspector raises concerns that inspectors may not have the time to adequately identify and remediate labor law violations. In addition, MOL reported that inspections in the agricultural sector were insufficient to meet the demands of Agricultural Workers Bylaw No. 19. (3) While the government increased the inspectorate's budget by almost 20 percent in 2022, sources report that the inspectorate has insufficient financial resources to hire a sufficient number of labor inspectors. (8)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Jordan took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of information on its criminal law enforcement efforts.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (19)	Yes (8)

The government did not provide complete information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. However, criminal law enforcement agencies investigated a case of child sex trafficking involving two girls during the reporting period. The girls' mother was charged under the trafficking law and remained imprisoned through the end of the reporting period. The government further stated that the trafficker was aided by foreigners who subsequently left the country. (8) A further 42 cases involving the use of children to sell, distribute, and promote drugs were investigated. (8) Additionally, the Counter-Trafficking Unit and the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) referred a total of five cases of forced child labor to shelter services. (40)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee on Child Labor	Formulates new policies, amends legislation as necessary, and oversees the implementation of child labor policies. Led by MOL, members include three other ministries, plus international and civil society organizations. (8) In 2022, the National Committee on Child Labor helped draft the National Strategy for the Reduction of Child Labor (2022–2030). (8)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Strategy for the Reduction of Child Labor (2022–2030) †	Outlines the roles and responsibilities of key government agencies, including the Ministries of Education, Labor, and Social Development; NGOs; and other stakeholders involved in identifying and responding to cases of child labor. Based on the Framework to Reduce Child Labor, MOL inspectors monitor child labor and refer cases to the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) and the Ministry of Education for the provision of services. (42,43) Approved in 2022. (8)
Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (2018–2022)	Integrated a refugee-oriented humanitarian response with a strategic plan for increasing the resilience of local communities. The plan had a particular focus on economic strengthening, education, and social protection. (44) Active in 2022. (45)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (46)

The government has yet to implement the Plan of Action to Eliminate Child Labor in Tourism in Petra since passing it in 2015. (46)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of services to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Child Labor Units†	Consists of Child Labor Units within MOSD and MOL. The MOSD unit provides support to children engaged in child labor, returns them to school, and provides services to their families; provides vocational training for youth; organizes training on child labor for families; and maintains the website of the National Child Labor Database. (47) Provides services to children engaged in child begging through centers in Madaba and Deleil (Zarqa). (39) Active in 2022. (8) The MOL unit coordinates government campaigns against child labor, conducts training, and raises awareness about child labor issues. (7) Manages the Child Labor Monitoring System, a case management tool that helps coordinate efforts by relevant government agencies and civil society organizations to ensure that children are removed from child labor and provided with critical social and educational services. (23)

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
Addressing the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the Agriculture Sector†	Aims to reduce child labor in the agriculture sector, taking into consideration vulnerabilities of children and their families, with field visits by joint teams of MOL inspectors and behavior monitors from MOSD and the Family Healthcare Institute of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation. (48) Works in informal tented settlement communities in rural and remote parts of Mafraq and the Jordan Valley that have not received child labor protection support. (3)
Program to End the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Zarqa and Amman	Funded by UNICEF, implemented by the Rowad al Khair Society and with the participation of MOL, this program aims to identify 400 of the most vulnerable children in Zarqa and Amman to receive psychosocial support, access to education, and other training to reduce the number of children subjected to the worst forms of child labor. (49)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Jordan.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (13,17,51-53)

Although Jordan has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs does not fully address the extent of the problem, including child labor in construction and street vending.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Jordan (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Improve the quality of the Ministry of Labor's hotline by making it easier to locate and ensuring that operators, including those who speak foreign languages, are available outside of business hours, and that all messages are addressed.	2018 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 172 to 195 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 2.9 million people.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient resources to fulfill its mandate.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the number of inspections conducted per labor inspector affords inspectors enough time to adequately identify and remediate labor law violations, including in the agricultural sector.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Implement the Plan of Action to Eliminate Child Labor in Tourism in Petra.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Continue to expand access to education for all children including Syrian and non-Syrian refugees, ensuring that students have transportation, are able to purchase supplies and uniforms, students are not bullied or harassed, and school hours are extended.	2013 – 2022
	Institute programs to address the worst forms of child labor in construction and street vending.	2013 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Kazakhstan made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government provided data on labor inspectorate funding for the first time since 2020 and increased that funding significantly. Training for labor inspectors was also provided, and new courses were created on the identification and remediation of child labor, including child trafficking. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Kazakhstan is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued the implementation of the revised Entrepreneurial Code that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. On December 30, 2021, the President of Kazakhstan signed a law significantly restricting the circumstances under which unannounced inspections can be performed. The new law, which came into effect on January 1, 2023, codifies and expands the government's existing practice under which unannounced inspections are prohibited in all cases, except in the presence of compelling grounds, and supporting evidence enclosed to such a complaint, or if an inspection is mandated by judicial or tax authorities. The lack of unannounced inspections may leave potential violations of child labor laws and other labor abuses undetected in workplaces. Children in Kazakhstan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in markets. The government lacks current, comprehensive, and detailed research on child labor, including in cotton production. In addition, the government extended a moratorium through December 2022 under which labor inspections of small enterprises were permitted only in cases that pose a mass threat to life and health, law and social order, or national security.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Kazakhstan.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.2 (79,690)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	90.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	3.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3 (MICS 3), 2006. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including harvesting vegetables, weeding, collecting worms, and harvesting cotton† and tobacco† (3-6)
	Milking cows, tending livestock, including horses and goats (4,7)
Industry	Construction† and road repair, activities unknown (3,4,8)
Services	Working in markets and on the streets, including transporting and selling items† (3,4,8-12)
	Domestic work, including childcare (3,4,8,13)
	Working in gas stations† (3)
	Car washing† (3,12)
	Working in catering and in restaurants† as waiters (3,12,14)
	Working as bus conductors† (3)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,15)
	Forced begging (15,16)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (3,15,17)

[†] Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

There is no current and comprehensive research on child labor in Kazakhstan that can provide details about the number of children working in different sectors (including in construction, services, or the cultivation of cotton or other forms of agriculture), the nature of their work, or the hazards involved. (9) However, research indicates that children from the Kyrgyz Republic, some of whom may be unaccompanied, are reported to engage in work in Kazakhstan. (4) Migrant children seeking work are often unable to work legally, limiting their entitlement to work protections. Although migrant children theoretically have the right to part-time work once they are 16, in practice, many are unable to obtain work permits because they do not list "work" as their purpose for visiting the country when entering Kazakhstan. (4, 15) Fear, corruption, and discrimination against migrants can also prevent migrant children from the Kyrgyz Republic from obtaining legal work permits. Kyrgyzstani migrant children over the age of 16 who have an irregular migration status are particularly vulnerable to administrative fines, arrest, and detention with adults. (4)




Migration authorities sometimes register migrant children under age 16 as unnamed family members, rather than under their own names, which prevents them from receiving Kazakhstani identification documents. (18,19) Some of these undocumented migrant children fall victim to forced child labor, and commercial sexual exploitation in Kazakhstan. Undocumented children may also face difficulties accessing health and education services. (3-5,15) Although Kazakhstan guarantees free education regardless of migration status, migrant children face barriers to accessing education. Children may enroll in school without identification documents; however, these documents are required to receive an official diploma. (3) Additionally, landlords often do not register migrant tenants, which may prevent migrant children from enrolling in local schools. (19)

Children with disabilities in Kazakhstan face challenges accessing education due to inaccessible school buildings, a lack of specialists able to provide inclusive education services, and official disability evaluations that render children eligible for at-home education only or ineligible for education entirely. (19,20) Children with disabilities who live in specialized, closed-care institutions may be compelled to assist with caring for younger children, including feeding, changing diapers, bathing, and dressing them. (13) In addition, disabled children who are unable to access mainstream education are at greater risk of being sent to such state institutions where they may not be able to access education and may be subjected to labor exploitation. (13,20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Kazakhstan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

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The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Kazakhstan’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the exclusion of informal work from labor legislation.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	18	Articles 31 and 69 of the Labor Code; Article 153 of the Criminal Code (21,22)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Article 26.1(2) of the Labor Code; Article 153 of the Criminal Code (21,22)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 26.1(2) of the Labor Code; Decree of the Minister of Health and Social Development No. 944 of 2015 (21,23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 7 of the Labor Code; Articles 3, 128, and 135 of the Criminal Code (21,22)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 135 of the Criminal Code (22)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 134, 135, and 312 of the Criminal Code (22)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 132, 133, and 135.2(9) of the Criminal Code; Article 26.1(2) of the Labor Code (21,22)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	19	Article 38.1(2) of the Military Service Act (24)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 31 of the Military Service Act (24)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 41 of the Law on Children’s Rights; Articles 132 and 267 of the Criminal Code (22,25)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17‡	Article 30 of the Constitution; Articles 12 and 30 of the Law on Education (26,27)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 30 of the Constitution (26)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (28,29)

In 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) developed a draft bill targeting trafficking in persons, which is designed to improve Kazakhstan’s legal framework on human trafficking in accord with international recommendations. Among other changes, the draft bill adds child trafficking as a specific offense. (17) However, the Labor Code’s protections, including the minimum age for employment and prohibitions on hazardous work, do not meet international standards because they do not cover children working without a written employment contract. (21) Although Article 134 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan criminalizes involving a minor in prostitution, and Article 135 of the Criminal Code criminalizes trafficking of minors, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation, no law clearly criminalizes the users (clients) of prostitution involving children. (22) However, government officials report that any users identified in the course of a prostitution investigation involving minors will be charged under Article 122, which criminalizes adult sexual relations with persons under the age of 16. (17,30) Children in Kazakhstan are required to attend school through the completion of secondary education, which typically ends when they are around 17. This standard makes children age 17 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are still subject to legal restrictions on the hours and times of day they may work. (21,26,27)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP)	Enforces child labor laws and conducts labor inspections through the Ministry's Committee on Labor and Social Protection. Responsible for implementation and control functions in the fields of labor, employment, and social protection. (3,8,9) Implements the special social services program that funds shelters for survivors of trafficking, including children. In 2022, the MLSP's Committee on Labor, Social Protection, and Migration split into two different committees, with one focused on labor and social protection and the other on migration. (3) The chairperson of the labor and social protection committee holds the position of Chief Labor Inspector and coordinates the work of labor inspectors in the regions. (3)
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA)	Oversees police and specialized law enforcement officials, including an Anti-Trafficking Unit. Identifies and carries out initial investigation of criminal cases involving the worst forms of child labor and hazardous child labor and refers cases to the Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution. (3) Engages in identification and protection of human trafficking victims, including child victims. In February and September of 2022, conducted activities under the ongoing multi-year operation "Stop-Trafficking," which identified five cases of trafficking of minors and six cases of coercion of minors into prostitution. (3)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Kazakhstan took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including lack of an appropriate number of inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	\$5.2 million (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	256 (8)	261 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (21,31)	Yes (21,31)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (8)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	4,300 (8)	4,920 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	9 (8)	3 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	9 (8)	5 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	9 (8)	5 (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (8)	No (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (32)	Yes (32)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (3)

During the reporting period, the government significantly increased funding for the labor inspectorate since the last time data were available in 2020, when its budget was \$3.1 million. In addition, the Research Institute for Labor Protection under the MLSP conducted periodic recertification of labor inspectors, which required them to demonstrate competence in all facets of labor inspection. (3) In 2022, an advanced training course was conducted for labor inspectors and social workers, and the government developed a training program on the application of labor legislation and compliance enforcement, which included the eradication of child labor. (3) During the reporting period, labor inspectors identified three cases of child labor in the catering sector, and imposed administrative penalties against the employers. (3)

However, on December 7, 2022, the President extended a labor moratorium on small businesses until January 1, 2024. (3) Under this moratorium, an inspection can only occur at a small enterprise in cases that pose a mass threat to life and health, law and social order, or national security. (33,34) Small enterprises include businesses with fewer than 100 employees, and average revenue below a government-determined threshold. (32) Under the newly revised Entrepreneurial Code, beginning in 2023, all small businesses are exempt from inspections in their first 3 years after registration. (32,35)

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Furthermore, additional restrictions came into force in 2023 that prohibit unannounced inspections unless there are convincing grounds and supporting evidence for suspected violations, or the inspection is mandated by judicial or tax authorities. (3,35) This law officially codifies what has been standard practice since 2020, and is in part a response to complaints from business owners that labor inspectors use unannounced inspections as a pretext to solicit bribes. (30) Under current law, labor inspectors generally must notify entities at least 1 full day prior to a site visit or inspection unless the Entrepreneurial Code provides for an exception to this notice requirement. (3,32) Labor inspectors from the MLSP are empowered to conduct unplanned inspections on the basis of complaints, which are only considered valid if they are not anonymous. These notice requirements limit inspectors' ability to check that working conditions comply with national labor laws, including those related to child labor. (3,32) Labor inspectors are currently authorized to conduct unannounced inspections of businesses on the basis of requests from law enforcement agencies, in response to complaints related to certain extreme health and safety hazards, and in cases in which the worksite is in a remote location. (3,8,9,32) In addition, labor inspectors can conduct routine inspections on the basis of risk assessment reports. (8,32)

The government also works with NGOs to conduct raids to detect child labor violations during annual, interministerial campaigns to raise awareness about, detect, and address incidences of child labor. These campaigns are widely publicized, limited in duration, and occur at approximately the same time each year. (8,9) As a result, the raids conducted during these campaigns may fail to adequately detect child labor in seasonal agriculture or in businesses that conceal violations in anticipation of these high-profile campaigns. There is also no indication of any inspections or raids specifically targeted at agriculture, which remains a high-risk sector for child labor. (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Kazakhstan took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of law enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a failure to obtain convictions against those who exploit children in the worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	2 (8)	11 (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	1 (8)	9 (3)
Number of Convictions	0 (8)	0 (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (3)

In 2022, police investigated 12 cases related to sexual exploitation of minors, including 2 cases of trafficking in minors for the purpose of sexual exploitation, 4 cases of coercion of minors into prostitution, and 6 cases of production of pornographic materials with the participation of minors. Authorities also investigated 12 incidents in which minors were involved in the sale and possession of drugs. (3) Nine cases were prosecuted, but no convictions were obtained during the reporting period. Police officers also identified a trafficking ring of 11 people who recruited women and minors into commercial sexual exploitation through false promises of high paying employment. Six minors were removed from trafficking as a result of the investigation, and the alleged traffickers remain in custody awaiting trial. (3) All child survivors of trafficking were provided with social assistance through government-funded shelters, including the Ministry of Education's regional Centers for the Adaptation of Minors. (3,17)

MOIA's Academy trained 21 investigators on investigation of violent crimes against women and children, and 40 police officers were trained on the prevention of trafficking in minors, commercial sexual exploitation of minors, and the involvement of minors in illegal activities. (3) Additionally, MOIA's Investigative Department introduced a training program for investigators on anti-corruption legislation that strengthened the liability for committing sex crimes against minors, and worked with the Department for Combating Organized Crime to

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develop methodological recommendations for the investigation of human trafficking crimes, including trafficking in minors. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Coordination Council on Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Implements the National Action Plan (NAP) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2020–2022. (36) In 2022, the Council met to discuss implementation of the NAP, and draft legislation which would further clarify the types of light work permitted for children ages 14–16. (3)

The Ministry of Education (MOE), previously the Ministry of Education and Science, also coordinates child protection activities, including response to child labor complaints. MOE's regional Departments of Education and regional Centers for the Adaptation of Minors are responsible for the coordination and management of all child protection activities, including providing services for child survivors of trafficking. (3, 17) An official from the regional-level Department of Education responds to reports of child labor and determines whether law enforcement should investigate cases of alleged child labor. (37) If the case is in agriculture, local officials meet with parents and school officials to reinforce that children should be in school during the academic year. MOE's Center for the Adaptation of Minors provides assistance to survivors of the worst forms of child labor and makes referrals to appropriate government services or NGOs for further assistance. (37) MOE's Child Protection Committee also runs a hotline to receive reports of child labor. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including insufficient implementation of policies related to child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan (NAP) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2020–2022)	Addressed three priority areas, which included (a) the creation of policies and laws to eliminate the worst forms of child labor; (b) the creation of programs to monitor vulnerable communities and sectors with the highest risk of child labor, and provide services to children who have been exploited in child labor; and (c) raising awareness about the worst forms of child labor. (36) During the reporting period, the government published a report on activities undertaken in 2022 to implement the NAP. (3)
National Action Plan to Counter Trafficking in Persons (2021–2023)	Includes legislation improvements to provide shelter assistance to non-citizen survivors, align the legal definition of human trafficking with international standards, and improve identification procedures for front-line officials. (3,8) Some of the planned activities specifically target the worst forms of child labor, including efforts to prevent forced child labor, including the exploitation of child labor in cotton and tobacco fields and at construction sites; monitor and exchange data between competent agencies on advertisements of human trafficking and child pornography; and conduct human trafficking prevention and awareness campaigns for children. (3,8) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Counter Trafficking in Persons during the reporting period.
Roadmap to Strengthen the Protection of the Rights of Children, Counter Domestic Violence, and Address Suicide Among Adolescents (2020–2023)	Addresses issues related to children's mental health and social well-being. (38) In 2022, under this policy, the government implemented anti-bullying protocols in schools, and created a framework to identify children requiring additional support. Teachers and psychologists assisted over 7,000 children through this policy during the reporting period. (3)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (9,38)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Juvenile Care Centers†	MOE-run centers for minors located throughout Kazakhstan. Provide temporary shelter and assistance to vulnerable children, including child survivors of the worst forms of child labor, and street children. (9,39) Research was unable to determine whether the centers were active during the reporting period.
Shelters for Trafficking Victims†	Funded by the government and operated by NGOs, they provide legal, psychological, medical, and educational services to survivors of human trafficking, including minors, in seven provinces and two cities, including Almaty. (15,39) In 2022, the government removed all identified child survivors of sexual exploitation from the circumstances of exploitation, and referred them to government-funded shelters for social services and other assistance. (3)
Awareness-Raising Campaigns‡	Raise public awareness on child labor issues, including the annual "Twelve Days Against Child Labor" campaign, conducted June 1–12, 2022, in which the government and NGOs organized over 7,100 joint checks to inspect over 10,300 sites, including local markets, gas stations, and construction sites. The national campaign reportedly reached over 900,000 children and 420,000 parents and employers. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Kazakhstan.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (40)

Although the Government of Kazakhstan implemented programs in 2022 to protect vulnerable children and raise awareness about child labor, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs to assist children engaged in child labor in agriculture or service sectors.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Kazakhstan (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that minimum age provisions and hazardous work prohibitions apply to all children, including those working without an employment contract.	2016 – 2022
	Increase the compulsory education age from 17 years old to 18 years old to align with the minimum age for work.	2022
	Criminally prohibit and penalize the use of a child for prostitution.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Strengthen the labor inspection system by eliminating barriers for onsite and unannounced inspections, as well as targeting high-risk industries for inspections.	2020 – 2022
	Lift the moratorium on labor inspections at small enterprises and ensure that the labor inspectorate conducts routine, targeted, and unannounced labor inspections at such businesses as appropriate.	2020 – 2022
	Strengthen detection of child labor by ensuring that targeted enforcement efforts, such as raids and unannounced labor inspections, are undertaken throughout the year and in all sectors in which children are vulnerable to child labor, including in agriculture.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information on penalties imposed for criminal cases of the worst forms of child labor.	2022
Government Policies	Publish information on activities undertaken to implement the National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Conduct research to gather comprehensive data on child labor, including the activities carried out by children working in agriculture, in construction, and in the service sector, to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Remove barriers that prevent migrant children, ages 16 and 17, from obtaining legal work permits for light work.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that migrant children who must be detained are housed in appropriate facilities separate from adult detainees.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that all children have access to education and may receive official diplomas, including children with irregular migration status and children with disabilities, and raise awareness in vulnerable communities about existing remedies for denial of school enrollment.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that Juvenile Care Centers continue to operate and publicize information on activities undertaken during the reporting period.	2021 – 2022
	Institute programs to address child labor, particularly in the agriculture and service sectors.	2014 – 2022

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In 2022, Kenya made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government enacted the Children's Act, strengthening legal protections for children from child labor, including mandating the development of a light work framework, and outlining child protection mandates of government agencies, such as protecting children from armed conflict. In addition, the government substantially increased the number of worksite inspections for the reporting period, while achieving convictions and imposing sentences on two individuals for crimes related to human trafficking of children. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Kenya is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Elements within the Kenyan Defense Forces likely sustained in-kind support of a Somali federal member state group that has been implicated in the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Children in Kenya are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced domestic service. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Key coordinating committees related to the elimination of child labor lack adequate resources to carry out their mandates, and the labor inspectorate does not have sufficient financial and human resources, affecting its ability to ensure that child labor laws are enforced.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Kenya.

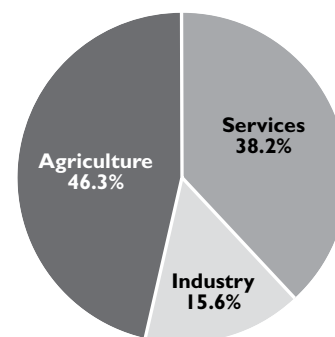
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	11.6 (1,468,203)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	93.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	11.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		99.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Household Budget Survey (HBS), 2019. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming,† including the tilling of land, weeding, pruning, harvesting, transportation, and scaring off animals for production of tea and coffee, khat (<i>miraa</i>),† rice, sisal, sugarcane, tobacco, corn, and flowers (3-16)
	Herding and guarding cattle and livestock† (8,9,13-17)
	Fishing,† including for tilapia, sardines, Nile perch, and other fish, handling nets, cleaning fish and utensils, disposal of waste, and cleaning boats (14-19)
	Forestry, including cutting trees, fetching and burning wood to produce firewood and charcoal (9,14,20)
Industry	Construction,† including carrying bricks and transportation of materials (8,14)
	Quarrying,† including crushing rocks and stones, ferrying stones and gravel, and harvesting coral (8,11,14,16,21)
	Harvesting sand† (8,14-17,19,22-24)
	Making bricks† (9,14,21)
	Mining† for gold (14,16-26)

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work,† including caregiving (13-15,19,27,28)
	Street work, including vending (8,14,17,27)
	Transporting goods and people by bicycle,† motorcycle,† and handcart† (8,14,29,27)
	Garbage scavenging,† including for scrap materials (12,14,16,30-32)
	Begging† (13,14,29,33)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9,13,19,29,33-38)
	Use in illicit activities, including in drug trafficking, intelligence gathering to plan for criminal operations, and providing security for criminal operations (12,13,29,39-42)
	Forced labor in slaughterhouses, sand harvesting, begging and street vending, domestic service, herding livestock, fishing, and agricultural work (13,19,27,43-46)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children work at informal gold mining sites in western Kenya, using pickaxes and other dangerous tools, working underground, and carrying heavy loads. (25,26,47,48) In some instances, children working at mining sites have been trapped in collapsed mines, suffocated, or exposed to mercury poisoning. (25-29) In addition, children working in domestic service are often subject to long work hours and physical and sexual abuse. (45) Research indicates rising cases of children working in the harvesting of sand, which sometimes involves exploitation by criminal syndicates. (12,23,24)

Kenyan children are subjected to forced labor, including in domestic service, and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, both within and outside the country. (19,45,46) Human traffickers exploit children from neighboring East African countries in domestic servitude, work in slaughterhouses, agriculture, and in commercial sexual exploitation. (12,49) Both boys and girls are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in tourism-heavy areas on the Kenyan coast, near gold mines and khat production sites, along major highways, and in Nairobi and Kisumu. (29,37,38,45,50,51) Commercialized sexual exploitation increasingly occurs in private villas and vacation homes to avoid law enforcement detection in hotels, and there is research indicating increasing use of online recruitment tactics to lure children into commercialized sexual exploitation. (19,52) Children living in refugee camps, especially those who identify as LGBTQI+, are targeted for commercial sexual exploitation. (19,53) Moreover, traffickers increasingly exploit children with disabilities from Tanzania and other neighboring countries in forced begging. (19)

Reports indicate local elements of the Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) maintain ongoing support of Jubaland Security Forces (JSF), a federal member state group in Somalia, that the UN and other organizations report as recruiting and using children in armed conflict. Such support has included training, provision of transportation (including armed vehicles), intelligence sharing, payment of salaries of JSF combatants, and allowing JSF regiments to garrison in northern Kenya, near the border of Somalia. (13,54-56) Local NGOs and community leaders in both northern Kenya and Jubaland have likewise observed recruitment by the JSF, sometimes even occurring on the Kenyan side of the border, with some KDF elements providing direct training to child recruits. (13,57) Research cannot identify any screening or mitigation procedures within the KDF to ensure that children recruited by the JSF and their respective units are not benefiting from Kenyan training and other forms of tactical support. Reports also indicate that criminals involved in terrorist networks lure and recruit Kenyan children to join non-state armed groups, primarily Al Shabaab, in Somalia, sometimes with fraudulent promises of lucrative employment. (52)

Despite the reopening of schools following the COVID-19 pandemic, some children have not returned and are in child labor. (15,58,59) A severe drought and food shortages have increased school absenteeism and child labor vulnerabilities, particularly in Kenya's northern counties. (14,15,60-62) Some children living in Kenya also lack birth registration and national identification documents, resulting in difficulties in accessing services and education. (14,63,64) Although Kenya law mandates free basic education and prohibits schools from charging




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tuition fees, the cost of unofficial fees levied by local schools, as well as the cost of books and uniforms, prevents some children from attending school, particularly at the secondary level. (16,37,63,65,66) Long travel distances, teacher and staff shortages, and sexual abuse within schools further contribute to children in Kenya dropping out of school and becoming vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (67-69) Furthermore, children seeking asylum or of refugee status are often restricted to living in designated areas, such as the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps, where there are limited schools and existing facilities lack sufficient teachers, textbooks, electricity, and latrines. Children who are refugees are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. (43,50,70,71)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Kenya has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Kenya's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the gap between the compulsory education age and the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Sections 2, 52, and 56 of the Employment Act; Sections 12 and 16 of the Employment (General) Rules; Section 10.4 of the Children Act; Sections 18.1 and 18.2 of the Children Act of 2022 (66,72-74)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 2, 53.1, and 64 of the Employment Act; Sections 2 and 10.1 of the Children Act; Sections 2 and 18 of the Children Act of 2022 (66,72,74)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Sections 2 and 52 of the Employment Act; Section 12 and the Fourth Schedule of the Employment (General) Rules (72,73)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 30 of the Constitution; Sections 2, 4, and 53.1 of the Employment Act; Sections 174 and 254–266 of the Penal Code; Sections 2, 3, and 4 of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act; Section 13.1 of the Children Act; Section 18.3 of the Children Act of 2022 (66,72,74-77)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 2 and 3 of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 2 and 13 of the Sexual Offenses Act; Section 13.1 of the Children Act; Sections 2, 4, and 53.1 of the Employment Act; Sections 174 and 254–265 of the Penal Code (66,72,76-78)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 2 and 13–16 of the Sexual Offenses Act; Sections 2 and 53.1 of the Employment Act; Sections 2 and 15 of the Children Act; Sections 2 and 22 of the Children's Act of 2022 (66,72,74,78)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 2 and 53.1 of the Employment Act; Sections 2 and 16 of the Children Act; Section 24.1(b) of the Children Act of 2022 (66,72)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Sections 2 and 10.2 of the Children Act; Sections 6, 242, and 243 (1) of the Kenya Defense Forces Act (66,79)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Section 243 (1) of the Kenya Defense Forces Act (79)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 2, 3, and 10 of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 19 and 246 of the Children Act of 2022 (74,77)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Sections 2, 28, and 30 of the Basic Education Act; Section 2 and 13 of the Children Act of 2022 (63,74)
Free Public Education	No		Section 7.2 of the Children Act; Sections 28–29 and 32 of the Basic Education Act; Article 53(b) of the Constitution; Section 13 of Children Act of 2022 (63,66,75)

* Country has no conscription (79)

Children ages 13 to 16 are only permitted to perform light work. However, Kenya's laws do not meet international standards because they do not limit the hours for light work, except for agricultural and horticultural work. (73) As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (63,72,73,80) Moreover, although the Basic Education Act establishes free basic education and stipulates that children should not be denied admission to school on account of not paying fees, the law does not meet international standards because it permits schools to levy tuition for children who reside in Kenya but do not have Kenyan citizenship. (63)

In 2022, the government enacted the Children Act of 2022. (74) The law directs the Cabinet Secretary of Labor to enact regulations prescribing the types and conditions of work that children aged 13 to 15 and 15 to 17 can undertake, and includes specific protections for children from online recruitment and use in commercial sex and production of pornography. (74) The law also directs the state to establish mechanisms to facilitate the protection, rehabilitation, care, recovery, and reintegration of children who may have been recruited or affected by armed conflict, social strife, or natural disasters. (74) Kenya's legal framework, however, does not fully meet international standards for the protection of children from armed conflict, because the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act does not criminalize recruitment of children in the absence of force or fraud. (77) Although the Children Act of 2022 addresses this gap by prohibiting the use of children by armed groups both within Kenya and across the border, the penalty of imprisonment not to exceed 12 months is not commensurate with crimes of similar gravity. (74)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP)	Conducts labor inspections and enforces labor laws, including those related to child labor. (47) Directs activities to promote awareness and withdraw children from child labor through its Child Labor Division. (12,47,81) Following the 2022 elections, the Ministry was reorganized to include the State Department for Labor and Skills Development (SDLSD), which includes the Child Labor Division, and the State Department for Social Protection and Senior Citizens' Affairs (SDSPSCA), which is responsible for general child protection issues through its Department of Children Services. (14) The Department of Children Services maintains a Child Protection Information Management System that collects, aggregates, and reports on child protection data, including child labor violations, to assist child protection officials to track and report on child protection activities. (14,67) In 2022, approximately 166 cases of child labor were reported in the Child Protection Information Management System. Research, however, indicates there are gaps in coordination in information sharing and case management between the SDLSD and the SDSPSCA, and thus it is not clear whether these cases derived from labor inspections or other social protection interventions. (14,82) In March 2023, the Department of Children Services conducted a training on the Child Protection Information Management System to newly recruited child protection officers. (83)
National Police Service	Investigates and enforces laws related to the worst forms of child labor, in coordination with MLSP and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. (47) Includes the Anti-Human Trafficking and Child Protection Unit, which carries out investigations related to commercial sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking, and other worst forms of child labor. (43,67,84,85)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Enforces laws through the prosecution of criminal offenses, including labor-related offenses. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions directs the National Police Service to investigate cases. (47) Research indicates magistrates lacked specialized knowledge in children's laws, policies, and rights that relate to the worst forms of child labor, including the Sexual Offenses Act and the Children Act. (84) In response to these challenges, the National Commission on Administration of Justice held trainings for court users, including trainings in Nairobi and Kiambu counties held in May 2022. In addition, ILO trained four investigators on the new Children Act in December 2022. (14)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Kenya took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the SDLSD that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (12)	Unknown (14)
Number of Labor Inspectors	130 (86)	130 (14)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (87)	Yes (87)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (14)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	3,458 [†] (88)	8,131 [‡] (14,89)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (12,23)	Unknown (14)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (12)	Unknown (14)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (12)	Unknown (14)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (14)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (12)	Unknown (14)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (87)	Yes (87)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (14)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (12)	Yes (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (14)

[†] Data are from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

[‡] Data are from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

Research indicates that Kenya, although significantly increasing the number of worksite inspections, does not have adequate number of labor inspectors, and a lack of material resources, including facilities and transportation, likely hinders their capacity to enforce child labor laws and other labor standards, including in the agricultural sector. (14,90-92) Labor inspectors, moreover, are often tasked with mediating individual and collective labor disputes, which come at the expense of carrying out inspection visits. (93)

Kenya

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Kenya took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of training.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (12)	Yes (62)
Number of Investigations	38 (94)	Unknown (14)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	22 (94)	Unknown (14)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (12)	2 (95)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (94,96)	Yes (95)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (14)

The government did not provide comprehensive statistics on its criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor in 2022, but it reported at least two new convictions related to child trafficking, sentencing both convicted individuals. (95) The Kenyan Police also conducted an investigation in response to a media report highlighting human trafficking of Tanzanian children with physical disabilities, resulting in the removal of two children from forced begging. (95) However, a Kenyan appeals court overturned a previously reported conviction related to commercial sexual exploitation, in which some of the exploited individuals were children, for unspecified reasons. (95)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including inefficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Oversees efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor and comprises government agencies, private employers, and workers' organizations. Chaired by the Principal Secretary for Labor, with coordination duties performed by the Child Labor Division of the SDLS. (12) The technical team of the National Steering Committee on Child Labor engaged in planning meetings during the reporting period but produced no concrete outcomes. (86) Children Area Advisory Councils complement the National Steering Committee by steering child labor prevention efforts at the county level. (14,62) In 2022, ILO worked with county-level Children Area Advisory Councils to conduct trainings and integrate child labor prevention strategies into their work, including by convening workshops in Bungoma, Nairobi, and Kajiado counties during the reporting period. (62)

Research indicates that a lack of sufficient funding likely inhibits the National Steering Committee on Child Labor and other coordinating bodies from meeting and undertaking activities according to their mandates. (47)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy on the Elimination of Child Labor	Proposes strategies to prevent and eliminate child labor, including its worst forms, while providing support and rehabilitation for children removed from child labor. Includes measures to establish child labor-free zones, increase financial support for labor law enforcement, raise awareness, improve accessibility to education and social protection programs, and integrate child labor into corporate responsibility programs. (97)
National Plan of Action for Children in Kenya (2015–2022)	Provided an operational framework for coordinating, planning, implementing, and monitoring programs for children's welfare. Also outlined programs, awareness-raising activities, and research, with the goal of reducing child labor and other child exploitation cases by 50 percent by 2022. (98-100)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (67,100-104)

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Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor in Kenya during the reporting period. (14) Insufficient funding for public institutions has led to delays in both the development of new policies and the implementation of existing policies to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Kenya. (100)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
National Safety Net Program (2013–2026) [†]	Government-funded, social safety net program, with support from the World Bank. (67) During the reporting period, the National Safety Net Program supported 278,945 households with orphans and vulnerable children. (89) In addition, the government allocated approximately \$11 million (1.1 billion Kenyan shillings) to respond to the drought and food crises facing Kenya's northern counties, reaching 58,000 families as of August 2022. (105) These actions likely partially mitigated vulnerabilities of climate shocks and extreme poverty that contribute to child labor in Kenya.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

[†] Program is funded by the Government of Kenya.

[‡] The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (67, 106)

In September 2022, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP) and the ILO convened a national symposium on social protection as a means of addressing child labor and forced labor, responding to key recommendations from the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor. The symposium focused on four areas—enhancement of access to social security and social protection, universal access to education, ending child labor in agriculture, and financing of intersectional interventions around child labor—resulting in strategies to catalyze policy and programming development by government and non-state actors and elevate the importance of universal social protection as a means of responding to child labor in Kenya. (14,62) The workshop resulted in a workplan for the development of policy and implementation frameworks to strengthen social protection mechanisms, including interventions targeting elimination of child labor, which will be developed by the MLSP in collaboration with civil society stakeholders. (62) However, although Kenya has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Kenya (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2022
	Broaden light work regulations to limit the number of hours for all light work activities, including for work outside of agriculture or horticulture.	2019 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age of work from 16 to 18 to align with the compulsory education age and ensure that children up to the compulsory education age are covered by the light work provisions.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that laws providing free basic education cover all children in Kenya, including non-citizens.	2020 – 2022
	Increase penalties for all recruitment of children by non-state armed groups, whether by force or not, to be commensurate with crimes of similar gravity, such as forcible recruitment for armed conflict	2022
Enforcement	Publish information about labor law enforcement efforts, including the funding of the labor inspectorate, the number of child labor violations, and the number of child labor violations in which penalties were imposed and collected.	2009 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 130 to 1,314 to ensure adequate coverage all sectors, including agriculture, while reducing labor arbitration responsibilities that limit time dedicated for onsite labor inspections.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the Ministry of Labor has sufficient material resources, including transportation and offices, to address labor violations in all sectors, including agriculture.	2017 – 2022
	Publish information about criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, including the number of investigations and prosecutions initiated.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that magistrates handling child protection cases receive training on policies, laws, and procedures, including the Sexual Offenses Act and the Children Act.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Strengthen coordination between the Child Labor Unit and the Department of Children Services, including sharing of child protection data and referral of child laborers for rehabilitation services, to better facilitate management and resolution of child labor cases.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that all coordinating bodies, including the National Steering Committee on Child Labor, receive sufficient funding to fully carry out their intended mandates of overseeing efforts to eliminate child labor across government agencies, civil society organizations, and employer organizations.	2016 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period, including implementation of outlined strategies to increase child labor awareness, establish child labor free zones, and improve accessibility to education and social protection programs.	2017 – 2022
	Provide sufficient fiscal resources for public institutions mandated to develop and implement child labor policies, including the State Department for Labor and its National Steering Committee on Child Labor, as well as the State Department for Social Protection.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Put in place measures to strengthen the monitoring and prevention of child recruitment into armed conflict, including by armed groups receiving financial, training, transportation, and other forms of in-kind support from Kenyan Defense Forces, and develop accountability mechanisms to hold perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor, including child soldiering, accountable.	2020 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including girls and refugee children, by improving access to birth registration documents, increasing the number of schools, and improving existing educational facilities in refugee camps.	2010 – 2022
	Improve access to education by increasing the number of schools and teachers, addressing sexual abuse in schools, and eliminating or defraying the cost of school fees, books, and uniforms.	2010 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, including establishing interventions to support children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Kiribati made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In 2022, the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports, and Social Affairs launched a child protection case management and referral system called SafeNet, which allows personnel from the government, churches, and NGOs to share information and assist child victims, including those found in exploitive situations. Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Kiribati are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. Existing laws do not identify hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children. The law also does not specify the conditions under which light work can be undertaken. In addition, the government has not adopted a national policy to address the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Kiribati. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	14.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	29.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		93.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018–2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Construction and cargo loading (3)
Services	Street work, including vending and working in <i>kava</i> bars (4,5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including on foreign fishing vessels (3,6,7)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)-(c) of ILO C. 182.

In 2022, children were found street vending, selling food at night, and working in *kava* bars. They worked late hours and were exposed to extreme weather and other physical safety hazards. (5) A survey conducted in 2018 and 2019 found that 7 percent of children (approximately 357 individuals) worked in economic activities for more than the legally permitted number of hours. Moreover, 9 percent of children (approximately 463 individuals) were similarly involved in household chores at or above the age-specific thresholds, and 15 percent of children (approximately 750 individuals) were engaged in hazardous activities. (8)

Underage girls have been subjected to commercial sexual exploitation by crew members from foreign vessels. (3,6) However, there have been no reports of this occurring in the last 2 years as COVID-19 pandemic-related regulations have restricted entry of vessels into Kiribati. (4,5)




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II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Kiribati has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Kiribati's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 115 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (9)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 117 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (9)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 244 and 249 of the Penal Code; Sections 118(1)(a, c, d) and 122 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (9,10)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 2, 43, and 44 of the Measures to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act; Section 118(1)(b) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (9,11)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 136, 141, and 142 of the Penal Code; Sections 118(1)(f), 118(1)(g), and 118(2) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (9,10)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 142 of the Penal Code; Sections 118(1)(h) and 118(1)(i) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (9,10)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Sections 118(1)(e) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (9)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Section 7 of the Education Act (12)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 11 of the Education Act (12)

† Country has no standing military (13)

The government has not identified by national law or regulations the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. Also, under Article 116 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code, the laws do not specify the activities and hours of work per week that are acceptable for children engaged in light work, or the conditions under which light work can be undertaken. (9) In addition, as the minimum age for work of 14 is lower than the compulsory education age of 15, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (9,12)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment and Human Resources	Enforces labor laws, including those related to child labor. (4)
Kiribati Police Services	Enforce criminal laws related to forced child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. (5) Investigate cases of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children through a special Domestic Violence and Sexual Offenses Unit. (14)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Kiribati took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Employment and Human Resources that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of training for labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$17,300 (4)	Unknown (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	5 (4)	5 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (9)	Yes (5)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (4)	No (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	81 (4)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (4)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (4)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (4)	0 (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (9)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (5)

During the reporting period, virtual trainings for labor inspectors were conducted with the ILO, although trainings were not focused on child labor issues. (5) Although the number of labor inspectors meets the ILO's technical advice, the government's ability to inspect and report on child labor issues was affected by geographical distances, isolation, sparse population, and Internet connectivity challenges. (3) In addition, research indicates that labor inspections have not been extended to informal and high-risk sectors with evidence of child labor, including its worst forms, such as fishing vessels, kava bars, domestic work, and nightclubs. (15) Resource and capacity constraints restrict the government's services and activities related to labor law enforcement, including training for labor inspectors. (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Kiribati took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (4)	No (5)
Number of Investigations	0 (4)	0 (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (4)	0 (5)
Number of Convictions	0 (4)	0 (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	0 (4)	0 (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (5)

Financial resource constraints hampered the government's ability to provide trainings for criminal investigators. (4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Protection Working Group	A government interagency group coordinated by the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports, and Social Affairs. (5) Oversees the implementation of the Child, Young People and Family Welfare Act. (3) The Child Protection Working Group remained active during the reporting period. (16)

In November 2022, the government launched the Child Protection Referral Pathway. (16-18) In December, the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport, and Social Affairs held a week-long training on child protection for social welfare officers and counselors. The new Child Protection Referral Pathway was a main topic of this training. (19) In addition, the government continued to use and strengthen SafeNet, a child protection case management and referral system. (5, 16, 20)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Children, Young People, and Families Welfare System Policy	Focuses on strengthening the welfare system, in part by implementing services to prevent the abuse, violence, neglect, and exploitation of children and young people, including in hazardous labor. (21) During the reporting period, the government remained active in strengthening child protection activities and continued implementing this policy. (5)
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Addressed, developed, and implemented strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. This multi-national strategic framework program covered 14 South Pacific nations. (22,23) Activities were conducted under the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022). (22,23) Research was unable to determine whether activities took place in Kiribati in 2022.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (3, 6, 15)

Research found no evidence of a policy that focuses specifically on addressing the worst forms of child labor. (6)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	Prioritized children's rights including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. This was a multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy (2018–2022). (23,24) Research was unable to determine whether activities took place in Kiribati in 2022.
Hotlines†	Child Protection Officer-, Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports, and Social Affairs- and police-supported 24-hour hotlines for children to report violations, request information, or obtain access to services. Hotlines remained active in 2022. (5,16)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Kiribati.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4,25)

Foreign development partners supported funding for counseling and shelter services for vulnerable women and children experiencing domestic violence and exploitation. The geographical distance, isolation, and sparsely populated nature of Kiribati's islands challenges the government's ability to provide public services. (5) Although the government has implemented programs to assist children in exploitative and abusive situations, research found no evidence that the government has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children who are engaged in construction and street vending work, or young girls subjected to commercial sexual exploitation with crew members from foreign fishing vessels. (5)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Kiribati (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the law specifies the activities and number of hours of work per week that are acceptable for children engaged in light work, and the conditions under which children can engage in light work.	2015 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2011 – 2022
Enforcement	Institutionalize training on child labor laws for labor inspectors and criminal investigators and allocate funding for this training.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors are inspecting informal and high-risk sectors where there is evidence of child labor violations, including its worst forms.	2021 – 2022
	Publish labor law enforcement information, including labor inspectorate funding and the number of labor inspections conducted at the worksite.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses the worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in all sectors to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Implement social programs to address all relevant forms of child labor, including in construction and street vending.	2017 – 2022

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In 2022, Kosovo made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted the Law on Crime Victim Compensation, which expands the existing victims' compensation program and assists child victims of human trafficking and forced labor. Additionally, it adopted the Strategy for Advancement of the Rights of Roma and Ashkali Communities 2022–2024 that includes a focus on providing inclusive education for children from these communities. The government also worked with Save the Children to develop manuals for social services providers, which resulted in improved communications between providers when assisting vulnerable children. However, children in Kosovo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work, including begging and loading and transporting goods. The Labor Inspectorate and Centers for Social Work face financial and human resource constraints, which may impede their ability to adequately address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Kosovo. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	9.0 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	11.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019–2020. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including operating agricultural machinery† (3-6)
	Forestry, including operating machinery and transporting wood (4,7)
Industry	Mining, including underground extraction of coal by hand† (4-6)
	Construction and manufacturing, including operation of tools in hazardous worksites† (4,6,7)
Services	Street work,† including vending small items,† manual transport of goods,† and begging† (4-7)
	Garbage scavenging at dumpsites† (5,6,8,9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging (3,5,6,10,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5-7,10)
	Use in illicit activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,6,12)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Kosovo is a source and destination country for child trafficking, especially of girls. (4,7,13) Children are also sometimes forced to work in massage parlors by organized criminal groups. (13-15) In addition, Kosovan children and children from neighboring countries, especially Albania, are forced into street work, including begging, primarily in Prizren and Pristina. Most of these children come from the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian minority ethnic groups. (7,10,11,13-21) Economically vulnerable Kosovan children also sometimes work in construction and agriculture to support their families. (7,13,22,23)

Children from minority ethnic communities, especially girls, sometimes experience difficulty accessing education, in part due to a lack of native-language educational materials and insufficient subsidized transportation for rural children. In addition, according to national standards on education, children should not be excluded from schooling due to a lack of birth documentation, but some undocumented child laborers encountered challenges to school enrollment. (13) Children who do not attend school are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (24)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Kosovo holds a unique status *vis-à-vis* UN recognition that complicates its ratification of international agreements (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	N/A
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A
 UN CRC	N/A
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	N/A
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	N/A
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	N/A

Article 22 of Kosovo's Constitution incorporates the UN CRC into its national legal framework. (30) Despite Kosovo's unique status, the country worked with the UN through the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021–2025), which was implemented by the UN Kosovo Team and focused on promoting international standards and human rights. (31)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 7 of the Law on Labor (30)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 20, 23, 26, 27, and 45 of the Law on Labor (30)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Administrative Instruction No. 05/2013; Article 45 of the Law on Labor; Administrative Instruction No. 2008 (30-32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1 and 6 of the Law on Labor; Articles 163 and 165 of the Criminal Code; Articles 1 and 5 of the Law on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking and Protection of the Victims of Trafficking (27,30,31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 165 and 166 of the Criminal Code; Law on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking and Protection of the Victims of Trafficking; Articles 21 and 22 of Administrative Instruction No. 10/2017 (33-35)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 232 and 234 of the Criminal Code; Articles 47 and 62 of the Law on Child Protection (34,36)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 267-273 of the Criminal Code; Article 43 of the Law on Child Protection (36,38)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 6 of the Law on the Kosovo Security Force (37)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 149 of the Criminal Code; Articles 38 and 39 of the Law on Child Protection (36,38)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education (39)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo; Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education (25,35)

* Country has no conscription (40)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (39)

During the reporting period, the Law on Crime Victim Compensation was adopted to ensure coverage for child victims of multiple categories of abuse. In addition, multiple agencies throughout the government adopted Administrative Instructions that clarified the roles and operations of government entities involved in the preservation of children's rights. (13)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the framework of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Labor Inspectorate	Operates under the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers (MFLT). Conducts inspections to enforce child labor laws, removes children engaged in hazardous work, and refers children engaged in hazardous work to regional Centers for Social Work. (13)
Kosovo Police (KP)	Enforce criminal laws on forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Through the Anti-Trafficking Directorate, enforce laws on child trafficking. (3,4,6) Operate under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (5)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Enforces criminal laws on forced child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of children through special anti-human trafficking coordinators and mechanisms. (10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$920,700 (4)	\$874,798 (46)
Number of Labor Inspectors	37 (45)	35 (46)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (30)	Yes (46)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A	Yes (46)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	10,162 (45)	5,457 (46)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (45)	1 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	1 (16)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	1 (16)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (45)	Yes (16)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (45)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (30)	Yes (35)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (45)	Yes (16)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (16)

The Labor Inspectorate's mandate allows it to investigate employment contracts for working children between ages 15 and 18 who have entered into an employment contract for a limited period. When child labor is discovered, the Labor Inspectorate issues the penalty and works with the Kosovo Police (KP) to remove the child from child labor. (5,27-29) In addition, the Labor Inspectorate coordinates inspections with CSWs for suspected abuse of children under age 15. According to NGO and media reports, the number of cases reported does not fully reflect the actual number of child labor cases due to the high level of labor market informality. (6,7,38) Labor inspectors also have the authority to inspect private farms in Kosovo; however, due to a lack of human resource capacity to adequately cover all sectors and regions, the Centers for Social Work (CSWs), which also face human resource and budgetary constraints, typically conduct these inspections. (5,24,39,40)

There is limited inter-ministerial communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other government entities on issues concerning policymaking and enforcement related to child labor. (4,5,13,41) Multiple entities have reported that there is insufficient institutional capacity at the central and municipal levels and a need to improve funding and human resources for the CSWs. This lack of institutional commitment compromised the ability of CSWs to address cases of child labor in a competent and adequate manner. (5,12,13,42,43)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of training for criminal investigators on the identification of forced begging cases.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (5)	Yes (16)
Number of Investigations	124 (4)	44 (16)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	67 (4)	33 (16)
Number of Convictions	7 (4)	14 (16)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (16)

During the reporting period, criminal law enforcement authorities attended a number of relevant trainings, including several workshops on the Law on Child Protection, roundtables on policies affecting asylum-seeking, refugee, and immigrant children, and a study visit to a children's shelter. (13) However, authorities did not consistently identify cases of forced begging, which are instead typically classified as parental neglect or abuse. (6,14,44)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Committee for Prevention and Elimination of Hazardous Forms of Child Labor	Coordinates government policies to combat child labor. Oversees and provides policy guidance for activities to prevent and eliminate child labor. (6) Chaired by the Minister of Finance, Labor, and Transfers. (5) Comprises representatives of government agencies, KP, trade unions, and an NGO. (3) Research was unable to determine whether the committee was active during the reporting period.

Since 2013, the government has been collecting and processing data on labor violations, which it then makes available to all ministries and law enforcement bodies. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Children's Rights Action Plan (2021–2025)	Aims to improve social, economic, and legislative rights and the protection of children through developing institutions at the local and national levels. (44,45) Includes the accompanying Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2019–2023). (49) The policy was renewed and active during the reporting period. (13)
Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2019–2023)	Calls for a comprehensive framework of policies for the protection of children's rights, including the prevention, protection, and reintegration of children involved in hazardous child labor practices such as street work and underground ore extraction. (6) Active during the reporting period. (13)
Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities (2022–2024)	Focuses on employment, social issues, healthcare, and housing for the Ashkali and Roma communities. Aims to strengthen individuals' rights and full integration into society. (46) Includes targeted components that promote inclusive education for children from the Ashkali and Roma communities. The policy was renewed and active during the reporting period. (13,46)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, which cover the main sectors where child labor has been identified in the country (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Hope and Homes for Children†	Government-funded NGO shelter. Accommodates child victims of abuse and human trafficking. (40) Active during the reporting period. (16)
UN Kosovo/UNICEF Program (2021–2025)	Aims to increase availability of early childhood education opportunities, inclusion of children with disabilities, and justice for children through data generation and evidence-based policymaking. (26,47) Active during the reporting period. (13)
The Helpline‡	Government-operated hotline for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. (14) Active during the reporting period. (13)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (5,48,49)

Social services professionals in Kosovo estimate that approximately 4,300 children receive assistance per year. (50) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) notified civil society organizations that CSWs and domestic violence shelters would become the responsibility of the MOJ beginning in early 2023. (13) In addition, the government collaborated with Save the Children to develop manuals for social services case

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management. The collaboration also resulted in the creation of a mutual assistance protocol that allows both formal and informal services providers to more efficiently coordinate outreach and follow-up activities when assisting children who are more at-risk of falling outside of the system (e.g., those living in rural and remote areas). (13,51)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Kosovo (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that Centers for Social Work have sufficient capacity, funding, human resources, and training to address the specific needs of child labor victims.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the Kosovo Police are trained to identify and properly classify cases of forced begging.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information on the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed.	2022
	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted in the informal sector, including in markets.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that inter-ministerial communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other government entities on issues concerning policymaking and enforcement related to child labor is improved.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the Committee on the Prevention and Elimination of Hazardous Forms of Child Labor is fully funded and active and able to carry out its mandate to coordinate government policies to combat child labor.	2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in Kosovo to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including by making additional efforts to register Ashkali, Balkan Egyptian, and Roma children at birth and ensuring the availability of native-language teaching materials and subsidized transportation.	2011 – 2022

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In 2022, the Kyrgyz Republic made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Internal Affairs continued to conduct raids of businesses at high risk for labor law violations, including raids to identify vulnerable children and child labor. The Criminal Code was also amended to strengthen penalties for sexual abuse of children and involving children in illicit activities. In addition, the government funded the construction and staffing of 31 new schools to improve educational access. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Kyrgyz Republic is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued a law and practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. A new general moratorium on labor inspections was put into place from January 1 through December 31, 2023. The lack of unannounced inspections may leave potential violations of child labor laws and other labor abuses undetected in workplaces. Children in the Kyrgyz Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. Minimum age protections are not extended to children engaged in non-contractual employment, and research indicated that labor law enforcement efforts are not targeted to all sectors in which children are vulnerable to child labor, especially agriculture. In addition, the scope of social programs to address child labor is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Kyrgyz Republic. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	34.0 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	38.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Cultivating or harvesting cotton, walnuts, tobacco,† rice, potatoes, beans, dried fruits, and onions (3-12)
	Herding cattle (3,13,14)
Industry	Coal mining† (3,5,15)
	Brickmaking (3,11,15)
	Construction (3-6,11)
	Manufacturing (3)
Services	Working in bazaars and markets, including portering, shining shoes, and selling items, including food and beverages (3,7,10)
	Washing and repairing cars (3,6,11)
	Working in restaurants and cafes (3,6,7)
	Street work, including begging and collecting and sorting plastics (3,9,10)
	Domestic work, including child care (16)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of trafficking (3,11,17-19)
	Use in illicit activities, including trafficking drugs, as a result of human trafficking (20)

[†] Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




Child labor is most prevalent in Naryn province and hazardous child labor is most prevalent in Osh province. (5) According to UNICEF, an estimated 650,000 to 750,000 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic work abroad, and an additional 1 million are internal migrants. Children of migrants, particularly girls, are especially vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation and are frequently targeted by traffickers. (7,21) Children from the Kyrgyz Republic who travel to Kazakhstan to work, either with their parents or unaccompanied, cannot attend school due to a lack of documentation. These children engage in child labor in Kazakhstan in construction, farming, herding, or selling products in markets; some fall victim to forced child labor. (16,22) Within the Kyrgyz Republic, children of labor migrants have been identified engaging in child labor in markets. (23)

In the Kyrgyz Republic, school registration documentation requirements continue to prevent some children from enrolling in schools, particularly children whose parents are labor migrants. (3,4) Some children who have either migrated to the Kyrgyz Republic with their parents or were left behind when their parents migrated for work to other countries or other areas of the Kyrgyz Republic cannot access their birth certificates or guardianship documents, which are required for school enrollment. (8,21) Children living in rural areas and those with disabilities also have difficulty accessing education. (3) In rare cases, some parents prevent children from attending school for religious reasons, or require older children to miss school to care for their younger siblings. (3,4,8,24) However, during the reporting period the government made efforts to expand access to education by building 31 new schools and increasing staffing. (3)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Kyrgyz Republic has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the Kyrgyz Republic’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including minimum age protections that do not extend to children working in the informal sector.

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Articles 6 and 18 of the Labor Code (25)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 294 and 446 of the Labor Code; Article 72 of the Code on Administrative Liability; Article 15 of the Code on Children (25-27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 294 of the Labor Code; Decree 565 on the List of Works Prohibited for Persons Under Age 18 (25,28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 10 and 446 of the Labor Code; Article 15.2 of the Code on Children; Article 1 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking; Articles 166 and 170 of the Criminal Code (25,26,29,30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking; Articles 166 and 167 of the Criminal Code (29,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 166–168 of the Criminal Code; Articles 5 and 15 of the Code on Children (26,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 19, 180, 181, 282, and 283 of the Criminal Code; Articles 5 and 15 of the Code on Children (26,29)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 24.1 of the Law on Military Service (31)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 17.1 and 22.1 of the Law on Military Service; Article 392 of the Criminal Code (29,31)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 392 and 395 of the Criminal Code (29)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17‡	Article 16 of the Law on Education (32)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 16 of the Law on Education (32)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (32)

In August 2022, the Criminal Code was amended to include protections for children from sexual abuse and involvement in criminal activity. The amendments also increased fines for sexual and moral offenses against children and prison terms to include the possibility of life in prison. (3) Despite these efforts, the labor law governing the minimum age for work is not in compliance with international standards because it does not apply to informal work. According to Article 6 of the Labor Code, protections to children granted in the Labor Code, such as the minimum age for employment, are not extended to children engaged in non-contractual employment. (25) In addition, as the minimum age for work stated in the Labor Code is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (32,33)

Article 18 of the Labor Code prohibits children age 14 and under from working during school hours, and requires that parents give written permission for children age 14 to work. Children age 15 may work only for employers who have received permission from a worker's organization or a government regulatory body. (25) Articles 91 and 95 of the Labor Code also restrict the number of hours that children under age 16 may engage in light work. Children ages 14 and 15 may not work more than 24 hours per week, and daily shifts may not exceed 5 hours during school breaks or 2.5 hours when school is in session. (25) Despite these protections, the Kyrgyz Republic does not have a list of activities in which light work may be permitted. (34) Additionally, although Article 166 of the Criminal Code criminalizes the involvement of children in prostitution, no law clearly criminalizes the users (clients) of prostitution involving children. In addition, prohibitions under Article 167 against offering children for prostitution do not cover children ages 16 and 17. (29,35)

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III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, lack of authorization to conduct unannounced inspections in the Kyrgyz Republic may impede the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Social Security, and Migration (MLSSM)	Monitors worksites and refers child laborers to social services. (3) Coordinates with the Inspectorate for Minors' Affairs in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA), the Prosecutor General's Office, and regional State District Administration authorities to enforce child labor laws. (4, 11, 15, 33) Identifies at-risk children, refers them for social services, and monitors their well-being, including the prevention of their involvement in child labor. Runs a hotline to which anyone can report child abuse and exploitation, including the worst forms of child labor, and refers cases for criminal prosecution, if appropriate. (3) In 2022, the MLSSM developed a revised Program for the Protection of Children for 2023-2026, which includes additional measures to prevent the involvement of children in the worst forms of child labor. The MLSSM also resumed labor inspections, intensified efforts to develop Child Protection Plans at the local level, and created a web-based platform which allows individuals and businesses to address labor law compliance issues electronically. (3) Operates a hotline through which children, parents, and legal guardians can report child abuse and exploitation, including the worst forms of child labor, and receive referrals for services. (36, 37)
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA)	Enforces criminal laws related to child labor, including its worst forms. Conducts independent inspections and joint raids with MLSSM to identify violations, which can be referred to the Prosecutor General's Office for prosecutorial action. (3, 11)
Prosecutor General's Office	Implements and enforces state policies and laws related to child protection, including guaranteeing children's rights and enforcing laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor by identifying and prosecuting offenders. (3, 13)

The government has also established a National Referral Mechanism, which sets procedures and policies for (a) identification of victims of human trafficking, (b) referrals for and provision of social services to victims, and (c) protection of victims' personal data. (38, 39)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in the Kyrgyz Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, lack of authorization to conduct unannounced inspections in the Kyrgyz Republic may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (4)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (4)	50 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (25)	Yes (25)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (4)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (4)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	103† (4)	25 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (4)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	N/A (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (4)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (40, 41)	No (42)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown (4)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (4)	Yes (3)

† Data are from January 1, 2021, to September 30, 2021.

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A government moratorium on labor inspection of business enterprises expired on January 1, 2022, and routine labor inspections resumed. (3) However, in November 2022, the President issued a decree instructing the Cabinet of Ministers to pass a new general labor inspection moratorium for January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, which remains in effect. (43) These restrictions on unannounced inspections severely limit the State Inspectorate's ability to detect violations of labor laws, including those related to child labor. (44)

The Ministry of Labor, Social Security, and Migration (MLSSM) conducted 711 inspections during the reporting period, though it is unknown how many of these inspections took place on site. (3) The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) reports that is conducted an additional 176 unannounced inspections or investigations of child labor allegations, and 887 raids to identify working, neglected and homeless children. Labor inspectors also regularly participated in trainings, including a trafficking in persons simulation exercise and trainings on ILO standards. (3) Though the MOIA is authorized to conduct unannounced raids, in practice these investigations often require coordination across several government ministries and are frequently announced in advance. (3) Labor inspectors are also often reluctant to impose penalties or refer cases for criminal prosecution, instead preferring to recommend remediation of observed violations. Although the government notes 25 child labor violations were identified during the reporting period, no penalties were imposed for these offenses. (3) In addition, the government did not provide information regarding the budget of the labor inspectorate or the number of inspectors in 2022. However, research indicates that the State Labor Inspectorate employed fewer than 50 labor inspectors, and therefore, the Kyrgyz Republic does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,7,45-46) All labor inspectors are centrally dispatched from Bishkek and, due to a lack of both staffing and resources, seldom undertake efforts to detect child labor in rural areas, where children are especially vulnerable to child labor in manufacturing, crop cultivation, and cattle herding due to economic pressures and permissive social attitudes. (3,13)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Kyrgyz Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including prosecution planning.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (4)	Unknown (3)
Number of Investigations	3† (4)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	3 (4)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (47)	Yes (3)

† Data are from January 1 to September 30, 2021.

The government did not provide comprehensive information on its 2022 criminal law enforcement efforts related to child labor for inclusion in this report. However, the government did report investigating six cases of enticing a child to engage in pornography and one case of child trafficking. (3,19) Non-governmental organizations report that child survivors of trafficking are often questioned by law enforcement without appropriate psychological support. (19) In addition, reports suggest that Kyrgyz police officers engage in misconduct, including allegations that police threaten and extort sex trafficking victims, including minors; reports also indicate that police accept bribes from alleged traffickers to drop cases. (20) Judicial officials have also been reported to be an obstacle to prosecution of human trafficking offenses, including those involving children, by prosecuting cases under lesser statutes, accepting bribes, or warning suspects prior to raids. (14)

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IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Council for Women, Children, and Gender Equality	Coordinates government action to advance the rights of women and children. In 2022, proposed the creation of a Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children to be housed within the presidential administration. (3) Also met with members of parliament, state bodies, representatives of civil society, and human rights activists to discuss an action plan to advance the rights and opportunities of women and children for 2022–2024. (48)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Program for the Support of Family and Protection of Children (2018–2028)	Includes action items on addressing child labor, including revising the hazardous work list for children, enhancing social services for vulnerable children and families, and creating an Action Plan on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor. (49) Research was unable to determine whether the Program was active during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Cash Transfer Program†	Government-funded cash transfer program for families living in difficult situations, including families with children engaged in child labor. (47) However, based on available information, the amount of assistance appears to be low, and some families face barriers to accessing these benefits. (50,51)
Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) National School Attendance Database‡	Unified online database maintained by MOES to monitor school enrollment and attendance. Based on these data, government ministries and local government officials can identify and assist children who may be vulnerable to child labor. (8,47)
Shelters for Human Trafficking Victims†	Includes two 24-hour shelters funded by the government and operated by NGOs that serve victims of violence of all ages, including child trafficking survivors. One center is located in Bishkek and the other is in Osh. (36) MOIA also operates two daytime children's shelters, also located in Bishkek and Osh. (36)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (52)

In July 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a regulation on social assistance which provides low-income families with social assistance in the amount of \$1,160 (100,000 Kyrgyz soms) per year through territorial subdivisions of the MLSSM. Although the Kyrgyz Republic has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation and in agriculture, including cultivating cotton. (3) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement social programs to address child labor in the Kyrgyz Republic during the reporting period.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the Kyrgyz Republic (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's minimum age provisions apply to all children, including those working without an employment contract.	2014 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 16 to 17 to align with the compulsory education age.	2021 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit and penalize the use of a child for prostitution, including the users (clients) of prostitution involving children, and ensure that laws prohibiting the offering of children for prostitution cover all children under age 18.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities in which children may undertake light work.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate conducts unannounced, onsite labor inspections, and assesses penalties as appropriate.	2018 – 2022
	Publish complete information about the Ministry of Labor, Social Security, and Migration's efforts to enforce prohibitions on child labor, including information on the inspectorate's funding and the number of labor inspections conducted at worksites.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that child labor violations identified by criminal enforcement agencies are appropriately referred for investigation and prosecution.	2020 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from around 50 to 144 labor inspectors to provide adequate coverage for the labor force of approximately 2.9 million people and ensure that inspectors have adequate resources to conduct inspections in rural areas.	2012 – 2022
	Conduct targeted inspections in all sectors in which children are highly vulnerable to child labor, including in rural areas, agriculture, and manufacturing.	2020 – 2022
	Publish complete information about criminal law enforcement efforts to enforce prohibitions on child labor, including information on training, number of investigations, number of violations found, number of prosecutions initiated, convictions for child labor violations, and penalties imposed for the worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies investigate, prosecute, and impose penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor under the appropriate statutes, including cases of possible law enforcement and judicial complicity in abusing victims and protecting offenders.	2015 – 2022
	Require law enforcement officials to follow established procedures and ensure that child survivors or trafficking are not subjected to questioning without the support of a social worker or psychologist.	2022
	Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Program for the Support of Family and Protection of Children and make information about implementation measures publicly available.
Social Programs	Improve understanding of child labor issues in the Kyrgyz Republic by regularly collecting and maintaining data on child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that all children have access to free education, including children with disabilities, children in rural areas, those lacking residence registration, and those without birth certificates and guardianship documents.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that social programs, such as the Cash Transfer Program, provide sufficient benefits to reduce vulnerability to child labor and are accessible to families.	2019 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation and in agriculture, including cultivating cotton.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, Lebanon made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In June 2022, the United Nations Children's Fund expanded a national grant for children called Haddi. The program provides cash assistance to children at risk of child labor and child marriage, and to children with disabilities, children in non-formal education, and children needing nutrition support. However, children in Lebanon are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced labor in agriculture. Children also engage in child labor in the production of potatoes and tobacco. Furthermore, government officials continued to indicate that governmental funding is insufficient to properly carry out their duties. In addition, Lebanese law prohibits inspectors from inspecting informal workplaces, where the majority of child labor occurs, and social programs targeting child labor remained insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Lebanon. Data on key indicators on children's work and education are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2021. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of potatoes, olives, beans, figs, eggplants, and cannabis (3-11)
	Production of tobacco† (10)
	Fishing, activities unknown (4,7,11)
Industry	Construction,† including carpentry and welding† (3-7,11,12)
	Making handicrafts (4,11,13,14)
	Working in slaughterhouses† and butcheries (13)
Services	Street work,† including begging, street vending, portering, and scavenging garbage† (3,4,6,7,11,15-19)
	Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles† (4,11,13,16,19)
	Domestic work† (4,7,11,13)
	Collecting waste materials, including scrap metal (11,13)
	Food service,† including working as waiters (5)
	Working in small shops and groceries (4,5,7,11,13,16,19)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs, and arms dealing (4,6,11,12,16)
	Forced begging (9,12,15,16,20)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,11-13,21)
	Forced labor in agriculture (3,5,6,12,13)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Child labor in Lebanon is largely concentrated in agriculture, wholesale and retail, and street vending. (11) Children working in agriculture are exposed to harmful chemicals and long hours in the sun as they work mostly as farmhands. (10) Children also work in collecting garbage and scrap metal. (11,13) Child labor is prevalent among refugee communities in Lebanon. (14) An estimated 75 percent of Syrian refugee children working in the Bekaa Valley do so in agriculture. (22)







NGO reporting indicates that children are used in smuggling illicit fuel across the border with Syria. (11) Children, particularly Syrian refugee children, are forced to beg throughout the country. (4,20) Children involved in street begging are at increased vulnerability for further exploitation and abuse. (11) Syrian refugee children are also subjected to forced labor in agriculture. (3,5,13) In addition, some Syrian refugee children and their families in the Bekaa Valley are kept in bonded labor in agriculture to pay for makeshift dwellings. (23)

Both Lebanese and Syrian refugee children face barriers to accessing education because of public sector strikes, which include teachers. Additionally, Syrian refugee children face other difficulties, such as the cost of transportation and supplies, fear of passing checkpoints or of violence, lack of private sanitation facilities for girls, discrimination, bullying, corporal punishment, and a different curriculum in Lebanon than in their country of origin. (5-7,11,24) In 2022, the government continued its policy of admitting all refugee children regardless of whether they have the required documentation for school enrollment. (11) However, the public school system in Lebanon lacks the capacity to accommodate the large number of school-age Syrian refugee children. (14) Despite the official policy of schools being open to all, in practice, a small number of refugees have been denied access to schools. (6) In addition, children with two Lebanese parents are sometimes prioritized in school enrollment over children with a non-Lebanese father. (25) Students without transcripts are only eligible to receive a certificate, rather than a diploma, causing some undocumented students to drop out. (6) Children with disabilities, including refugee children, were unable to attend school due to insufficient accessibility or inadequacy of facilities, lack of specialized facilities, or unavailability of tailored services for children with disabilities. (26)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Lebanon has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Lebanon's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Article 22 of the Labor Code (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 and 2 and Annex 2 of Decree No. 8987 (28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987 (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 8 of Decree No. 3855; Articles 569 and 586.1 of the Penal Code (29,30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 586.1 and 586.5 of the Penal Code (30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 506, 523, 525–527, 586.1, and 586.5 of the Penal Code; Decree No. 8987 (28,30)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 586.1, 586.5, and 618 of the Penal Code; Article 13 of the Law on Drugs (30,31)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 30 of the National Defense Law (32)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 586.1 of the Penal Code; Annex 1 of Decree No. 8987 (28,30)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 49 of the Education Law (33)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 49 of the Education Law (33)

* Country has no conscription (34)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (33)

The Labor Code applies only to workers who perform work in industrial, trading, or agricultural enterprises and excludes domestic work and non-industrial, non-trade agriculture. (27) This does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected by the minimum age for work. In addition, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (33)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws through desk review and workplace inspections. (11) MOL's Child Labor Unit acts as government focal point for child labor issues and raises public awareness about child labor and the right to education. Receives complaints of child labor violations on its Child Labor Unit hotline. (11) According to local observers, MOL's hotline is not fully functional and works for a limited number of hours on official workdays. It does not have a system to register incoming calls. (16)
Internal Security Forces (ISF)	Enforce laws regarding child labor through the Anti-Human Trafficking and Moral Crimes Unit. (11) The ISF's anti-trafficking unit is reportedly underfunded and understaffed, and it has no field offices outside Beirut. (3)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Prosecutes violations of the Penal Code in coordination with ISF. Maintains general data and statistics on criminal violations involving child labor. (11) Refers at-risk children to shelters and protection services. Coordinates, through signed agreements, with civil society organizations to provide social workers who oversee court proceedings involving juveniles and deliver services to them, including children engaged in begging. (11) MOJ has stated that a lack of sufficient human resources hindered the government's ability to address child labor. (14)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Lebanon took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of a mechanism to assess civil penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	34 (35)	Unknown (11)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (36)	No (36)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (36)	Yes (36)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (11)

Lebanese law prohibits inspectors from inspecting informal workplaces, where the majority of child labor occurs. (6) In August 2022, Lebanese civil servants went on an open-ended strike over low pay and poor working conditions. (11) Due to the strike, civil servants are only showing up to work once or twice a week, including labor inspectors who had already curtailed the number of inspections they conducted in 2021. (7,11) Reporting continues to indicate that labor inspectorate funding is insufficient for inspectors to properly carry out their duties. (11,24) According to local observers, the MOL's hotline is not fully functional and works for a limited number of hours on official workdays. It does not have a system to register incoming calls. (16) Research also indicates that Lebanon does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (11,37) In addition, the government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Lebanon took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (11)
Number of Investigations	46 (4)	77 (11)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	Unknown (11)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	0 (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (11)

The government did not provide information on the number of prosecutions initiated or number of convictions. In 2022, an NGO provided additional training to the Internal Security Forces (ISF), local police, and municipalities to help authorities address the needs of street children. (11)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Raises awareness; coordinates efforts among government agencies; establishes standard practices; develops, enforces, and recommends changes; and ensures that government agencies comply with the law. Led by the MOL, includes representatives from six other ministries and other institutions and international organizations. (14) Research was unable to determine whether the National Steering Committee on Child Labor was active during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including lack of a comprehensive policy on eliminating child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to End Street Begging by Children	Seeks to end child begging by ensuring legal protection for street children, building capacity to protect street children, rehabilitating and reintegrating street children, and conducting outreach regarding the problem. (11)
Policy for the Protection of Students in the School Environment	Protects children's right to education and promotes non-violence in schools by establishing mechanisms to receive complaints of violence, mistreatment, and bullying, and addresses those cases while safeguarding children's privacy. Conducts training for school staff and officials on identifying risk factors. (39,40)
Work Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Association of Children with Armed Violence in Lebanon	Provides the policy framework for the prevention of children's involvement in armed conflict. (41)

Although Lebanon has adopted policies to address children's participation in street begging and armed conflict, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, as the National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor expired in 2019. In addition, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor in Lebanon during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Programs	UNICEF implements several programs with the Ministry of Social Affairs to address child labor through interventions. (11) In June 2022, UNICEF expanded a national grant for children called <i>Haddi</i> . The program provides cash assistance to children at risk of child labor and child marriage, and to children with disabilities, children in non-formal education, and children needing nutrition support. (11) The program pays between \$40 and \$80 to Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian families. Since <i>Haddi's</i> inception as an emergency program in 2021, it has paid out over \$43 million to vulnerable families and reached over 130,000 children. (42) Additionally, UNICEF continued to implement a 2019 program to reduce child labor in Tripoli. (11)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

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Although Lebanon has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in construction and forced child labor in agriculture. Moreover, some officials are reluctant to remove children trafficked by their families due to a lack of adequate social services. (9)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Lebanon (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including informal workers, domestic workers, and all agricultural workers.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that there is an adequate mechanism to receive and log child labor complaints and refer them for investigation.	2017 – 2022
	Track and publish information on labor law enforcement on an annual basis.	2009 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties and allow inspections of informal workplaces.	2015 – 2022
	Provide Ministry of Labor inspectors with proper funding and resources.	2011 – 2022
	Employ at least 120 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 1.8 million people.	2016 – 2022
	Publish information on the number of prosecutions initiated and number of convictions for violations of criminal laws.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies, including the Internal Security Forces' anti-human trafficking unit, have the necessary funding and staff to investigate and prosecute criminal cases of child labor in accordance with the law and establish field offices outside of Beirut.	2017 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Steering Committee on Child Labor meets on a regular basis and coordinates activities to address child labor.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor during the reporting period and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis.	2021 – 2022
	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as a new National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure access to public education for all children, including refugees, by improving transportation, addressing bullying and harassment, accommodating students with disabilities, ending corporal punishment, improving facilities, and accommodating students coming from a different curriculum than in Lebanon.	2010 – 2022
	Expand programs, including social services for human trafficking survivors, to fully address the extent of child labor, including in construction and forced labor in agriculture.	2013 – 2022

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In 2022, Lesotho made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Lesotho organized 17 radio programs and 39 school seminars with a focus on human trafficking and finalized a report with recommendations on how to improve the criminal justice system's response to human trafficking. The government also placed additional officers at the Moshoeshoe International Airport to help identify human trafficking victims and the Lesotho Police Forces rescued four girls from being trafficked. However, children in Lesotho are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in animal herding. Lesotho's compulsory education age of 13 is below the minimum age for work, which is 15, leaving children between these ages vulnerable to child labor. The government also lacks effective coordination mechanisms to address child labor, and labor inspections are not conducted in high-risk sectors, including the informal sector, in which child labor is prevalent.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Lesotho. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	30.1 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	93.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	32.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		90.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Herding animals, including cattle† (3-8)
	Farming, including planting, applying pesticides, and harvesting (5-7,9,10)
Services	Domestic work (3-7)
	Street work, including vending and trading (5,7,9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and animal herding, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,4)
	Use in illicit activities, including burglary and theft (7,9)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Lesotho is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. Children involved in animal herding are exposed to harsh weather conditions, sometimes leading to death. (3,4,11-13) Children, especially orphans, also sometimes voluntarily travel to other countries, including South Africa, for domestic work, and upon arrival they are subsequently detained in prison-like conditions and sexually exploited. (3,4,12) In addition, due to the high rate of HIV among adults, many children in Lesotho become orphans and are vulnerable to human trafficking. (3,4)

Lesotho




MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In Lesotho, primary education is free; however, secondary education incurs a fee that is cost prohibitive for many families. (3,5,14,15) Many children face limited access to education due to a shortage of teachers and schools, which causes them to travel long distances. In addition, the absence of sanitation facilities in schools remains a barrier for many children to access education, especially girls who are unable to access sanitary pads. (5-7) Children with disabilities also encounter difficulties with ill-equipped educational facilities and untrained teachers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many children dropped out of school to support their families. (7,13) These factors increase a child's vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor, such as human trafficking. (3,13) According to the Ministry of Social Development, children must produce copies of birth certificates to qualify for the Orphans and Vulnerable Children program that provides school fees and uniforms for orphans and vulnerable children. Research suggests that the low number of birth registrations results in children becoming stateless, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (6,16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Lesotho has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Lesotho's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a low compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 228(1) of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act; Article 124(1) of the Labor Code (14,17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 230(1) of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act; Article 125(1) of the Labor Code (14,17)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 230(3) and 231 of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (14)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 7(1) of the Labor Code; Article 9(2) of the Constitution; Article 5 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (17-19)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 5 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Anti-Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act (2021) (19,20)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 77 of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act; Articles 10–14 of the Sexual Offenses Act (14,21)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 45(b) of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (14)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 22(o) of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (14)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 22(o) of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (14)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 22(o) of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (14)
Compulsory Education Age	No	13‡	Part I Article 3(a), and Part II Articles 6 and 7(3)(c) of the Education Act (15)
Free Public Education	Yes		Part II Article 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b) of the Education Act; Article 22(k) of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (14,15)

* Country has no conscription (14)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (15)

As Lesotho's compulsory education age is less than the minimum age for work, children ages 13 and 14 are more vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to be in school or legally permitted to work. (14,15,17)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE)	Enforces minimum age requirements under child labor laws, including for hazardous occupations, and assesses compliance with child labor laws as part of general labor inspections. Assigns labor inspectors to operate a Child Labor Unit within the Ministry and provides recommendations that support the expansion of labor inspections. (22)
National Police	Investigate criminal child labor violations and work in conjunction with MOLE to enforce child labor laws, including those related to hazardous and forced child labor. Manage all trafficking in persons-related cases within the Lesotho Mounted Police Service and refer cases for prosecutions to the Public Prosecutor's Office. (7,22,23)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Lesotho took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	N/A (6)	\$151,036 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	27 (24)	29 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (17)	No (17)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (6)	No (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	940 (6)	875 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (6)	2 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (6)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (6)	0 (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (17)	Yes (17)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (7)

Lesotho

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Lesotho has a referral mechanism that is maintained through the collaboration of different ministries. When a case of child labor is found by MOLE, the Ministry's inspectors refer the case to NGOs and the Ministry of Social Development. (5) NGOs usually provide immediate material assistance, such as food, cash, or shelter, and the Ministry of Social Development conducts site and family visits and assists eligible children to register for a child grant program. (5) MOLE also receives walk-in complaints daily as well as whistleblower complaints. In addition, the Ministry of Social Development has a child helpline that addresses general child protection issues. (6)

Reports indicate that funding is inadequate for the labor inspectorate to carry out inspections and a large share of the money was used to pay for salaries. In addition, labor inspections are not conducted in high-risk sectors, including the informal sector in which child labor is known to occur. (5-8,22)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Lesotho took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including limited funding.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (6)	No (7)
Number of Investigations	1 (6)	2 (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (6)	0 (7)
Number of Convictions	0 (6)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (6)	No (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (7)

In 2022, four girls were rescued by the National Police Forces from traffickers in South Africa and were referred to a local NGO in Lesotho. (7) Although research could not determine the budget for criminal law enforcement during this reporting period, there is evidence that funding and resources were insufficient. (7)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Program Advisory Committee on Child Labor/National Task Team	Led by MOLE's Child Labor Unit, includes representatives from government ministries, trade unions, NGOs, and international organizations. (5) During the reporting period, held two meetings to review the report on the National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor and its Implementation Plan. (7)

During the reporting period, the Multi-Sectoral Committee on Combating Trafficking in Persons organized 17 radio programs that informed listeners about the issue of human trafficking and provided trainings for 22 diplomats in South Africa. In addition, students at 39 schools throughout the country were educated on human trafficking issues. (7,25) The government also finalized a report with recommendations on how to improve the criminal justice system's response to human trafficking, and outlined the strengths and weaknesses of their response. (25)

Cross-border enforcement mechanisms exist between Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa, and during the reporting period, both governments held two sensitization trainings on trafficking in persons for their respective staffs. (6,25,26) The enforcement entities are coordinated by different ministries—Home Affairs, Local

Government, or Police and Public Safety. (6) There is, however, a lack of coordination between these bodies, which negatively impacts implementation as some efforts are duplicated, while unclear lines of responsibility mean that other efforts are not undertaken. (6)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of a policy to address all worst forms of child labor in the country.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Strategic Framework and Action Plan (2021–2026)	Supports national and international obligations and commitments regarding human trafficking in line with the vision to eliminate all forms of trafficking in persons in Lesotho. Provides victim protection, guidance for the successful arrest and prosecution of offenders, and preventive measures. (22,27) In 2022, the government worked on strengthening border security to identify possible cases of human trafficking by placing additional security at Moshoeshoe International Airport. The government also held informational sessions on the dangers children face while herding and performing domestic work. (26)
Kingdom of Lesotho: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper—National Strategic Development Plan (2018–2023)	Identifies child protection services (from the Child and Gender Protection Unit, social welfare and health agencies, and the justice system) and their capacity to respond adequately to cases of violence, abuse, and exploitation of children, including child labor. Outlines prevention measures. (3,28) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Social Development continued to operate the Child Helpline Lesotho initiative, which provides 24-hour services, emergency assistance, and long-term resources to children who have experienced any form of violence and need care. (7,29)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (3,9,22)

In 2022, MOLE began to draft the second National Action Plan on Elimination of Child Labor and a plan for its implementation. (26)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to fully address the scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Orphans and Vulnerable Children Scholarship Programs†	Government program that pays for tuition, uniforms, supplies, and boarding fees for orphans and vulnerable children. (3) Benefited over 26,500 orphans and vulnerable children during the reporting period. (7)
School Feeding Program	Provides incentives for primary school children from impoverished backgrounds to attend school and improves retention. (3) Provided meals to over 50,000 pupils during the reporting period. (7)
Child Grant Program	Provides social cash transfers to the impoverished and households with orphans and vulnerable children with the aim of increasing access to basic needs such as food, health, and education. Implemented by the Ministry of Social Development and funded by the EU with technical support from UNICEF. (3,30) Benefited 46,000 households during the reporting period. (7)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Lesotho.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Lesotho (Table 11).

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

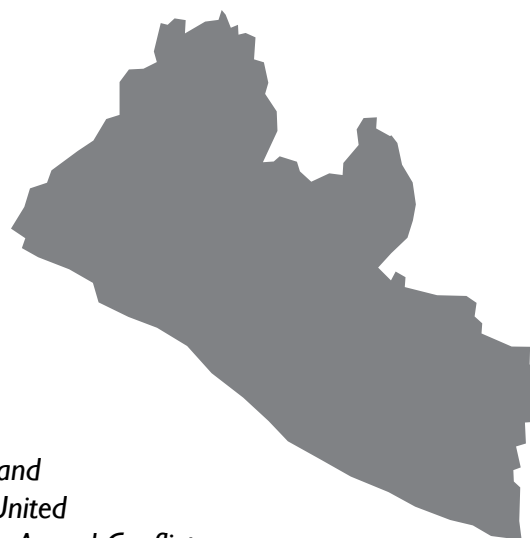
Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for compulsory education from 13 to 15 so it is consistent with the minimum age for admission to work.	2010 – 2022
Enforcement	Provide adequate funding and training for labor inspectors to carry out mandated duties.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies receive an adequate amount of funding, training, and resources with which to conduct investigations.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted in all relevant sectors, including the informal sector.	2014 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.	2009 – 2022
Coordination	Improve coordination and communication among coordinating bodies to clarify mandates to address all forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as livestock herding and commercial sexual exploitation.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Institute programs that mitigate the impacts of HIV and support orphans and vulnerable children.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that children with disabilities have equal access to education.	2018 – 2022
	Address educational and logistical gaps resulting in reduced opportunities for secondary education, including the shortage of teachers and schools, sanitation facilities, and secondary school fees.	2018 – 2022
	Increase birth registrations of children to reduce their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, including child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2015 – 2022

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In 2022, Liberia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government signed a new hazardous work list, which identified specific occupations and tasks prohibited for children, including sugarcane cleaning and harvesting, rubber tapping, palm cutting, bush clearing, and harvesting cocoa. The government also almost doubled the number of labor inspections it conducted, from 556 in 2021 to 1,044 in 2022. Finally, the government designed Standard Operating Procedures to guide the operations of Liberia's child labor monitoring systems at the district level. However, children in Liberia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the production of rubber and the mining of gold and diamonds. Liberia has yet to accede to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict or the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. Moreover, social programs are not sufficient to address the scope of the problem in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Liberia. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	30.4 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	80.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	28.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		60.6

These data are not comparable with data presented in last year's report due to changes in survey source, survey questionnaire, or age range surveyed.

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2019–2020. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of rubber, including cutting trees with machetes and using acid (3-7)
	Production of charcoal and bricks (4,5,7)
	Farming activities, including production of cocoa, coffee, cassava, and sugarcane (4,5,7)
Industry	Mining diamonds and gold, including washing gravel and using mercury and cyanide (3-5,7,8)
	Crushing stone (5,6)
	Construction, including carrying heavy loads† (5,7)
Services	Domestic work (4,7)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and selling goods (4-7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (4,5,7)
	Forced labor in domestic work, street vending, mining, begging, and work on small rubber plantations. (3,4,7,8)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3-5,7)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Liberia

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While the government has yet to collect comprehensive data on child labor activities to inform policies and social programs on a national level, there are reports that children in rural communities engage in rubber tapping and coal burning activities, while children in cities and surrounding urban communities crush rocks, engage in domestic work, and sell goods. There are also reports that some children are subjected to hazardous labor in the artisanal mining of gold and alluvial diamonds, with tasks that include washing gravel and working in mining shafts. (4,5,7) There have been anecdotal reports that children are also used to sell illicit drugs within the country by adults as a cover to evade arrest by law enforcement. (4,5,7) Human traffickers generally operate independently and are often family members or respected members of the community who promise poor rural relatives and neighbors better economic or educational opportunities for themselves (in the case of young women) or their children, but instead the young women and children are subjected to domestic servitude, forced begging, forced labor, street vending, and occasionally sex trafficking. Children are also transported from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone for work. (4,9,10) In addition, there are reports that children residing at various orphanages within the capital of Monrovia and in other parts of the country are vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to a lack of basic necessities at the orphanages, including food. (5)

Section 9 of the Children's Law mandates free basic education from grades one to nine, but the cost of registration fees, uniforms, transportation, books, and school supplies limits access to education for some children. In addition, family members often require children to work long hours, denying them the ability to attend school, even if they could afford to do so. (4,5) In schools throughout rural communities, few teachers are on the official Ministry of Education payroll and communities supplement their school's teaching force by recruiting and paying small stipends for volunteer teachers. (11) For secondary school students (grades 10–12), reports indicate there is a shortage of teachers, insufficient learning materials, a lack of educational facilities, and inadequate transportation, all of which limit access to education. (4-6) In addition, some teachers sexually exploit students in exchange for the promise of good grades, resulting in children avoiding or dropping out of school. (4-6) Research also indicates the ongoing practice of temporarily removing boys and girls from formal schooling to participate in initiation rituals that transition a child into adulthood; many of these children may not return to school after their participation in these initiation ceremonies, making them more vulnerable to child labor. (4-6)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Liberia has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 2.3 and 21.2 of the Decent Work Act (12)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 7 and Section 9.1 of the Children's Law (13)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 21.4 of the Decent Work Act, Hazardous and Light Work List of 2023. (12,14)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 2.2 of the Decent Work Act; Article 7, Section 8 of the Children's Law; Article 12 of the Constitution; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (12-15)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 7, Section 8 of the Children's Law; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (13,14,16)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Article 3, Section 21 of the Children's Law; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (12-14,16)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Chapter 16 of the Penal Code (12,17)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (12,13)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (13)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (13)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14	Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act (13,18)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act (13,19)

* Country has no conscription (20)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor (MOL) signed the Hazardous and Light Work List for Children under age 18 which identifies specific occupations and tasks prohibited for children, including sugarcane cleaning and harvesting, rubber tapping, palm cutting, bush clearing, and harvesting cocoa. In addition, 750 copies of the updated list were sent to regional labor ministries throughout the country for distribution. (7,19) In 2022, Liberia ratified ILO Convention No. 138: Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. This convention will go into effect on June 13, 2023. (21)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Conducts worksite inspections and addresses child labor violations. (4,5)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Promotes and executes the rule of law for public safety, including the prosecution of child labor perpetrators. (8)
Women and Children Protection Section	A division within the Liberia National Police (LNP) that investigates child endangerment cases and human trafficking in cooperation with the LNP's Anti-Trafficking Unit and the Liberia Immigration Service. (5)

Liberia

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Liberia took actions to address child labor. However, gaps exist within the operations of the MOL that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$25,000 (4)	\$25,000 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	55 (4)	54 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (23)	No (23)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (4)	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	556 (4)	1,044 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (4)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (4)	N/A (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (4)	N/A (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (4)	No (7)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for Liberia's workforce which includes approximately 2.4 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in transitioning economies, Liberia would employ about 60 labor inspectors. (7)

During the reporting period, the government trained 14 inspectors on child labor laws in Montserrado County. In addition, the MOL awarded contracts to ten local NGOs to conduct awareness training on Trafficking in Persons. (24,25) The government has a draft referral mechanism for child labor but, due to resource capacity and coordination constraints, cases were still handled outside the formal pathways. (7)

Generally, labor inspections are conducted in the formal sector and not in the informal sector in which children are more likely to be engaged in child labor. Inspectors are able to inspect private farms or homes for domestic child laborers but did not do so in practice during the reporting period. (5) In addition, lack of funding and logistical support results in the underutilization of the labor inspectorate's complaint mechanism. (4,9) Although inspectors cannot assess penalties, they can impose corrective measures, such as issuing notices of compliance, filing a complaint with the hearing board, and reporting violations to the MOL, which can assess penalties for violations. (5,6,25) However, the lack of penalty assessment authorization, limited funding, and insufficient fines, combined with poor opportunities for revenue generation, hamper the labor inspectorate's enforcement of child labor laws. (4,6,9,13) Law enforcement officials have reported that, due to lack of funding, officials who identify child labor or human trafficking cases are often expected to become personally responsible for the survivors' welfare, whether by providing financial support or taking children into their own homes. In addition, child labor is typically addressed as an issue of child endangerment, thereby causing a lack of reliable data on violations of child labor laws. (6,9,14)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Liberia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	8 (4)	0 (25)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	0 (25)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	0 (25)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	0 (25)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (7)

Although the MOL maintains a human trafficking hotline that can receive calls related to child labor, very few child labor calls come in and the hotline is irregularly staffed by contractors for only part of the day. (5,7,25)

Research indicates that the Liberia National Police (LNP)'s Women and Children Protection Section had limited training, financial, and physical resources, which hampered its ability to carry out investigations and other enforcement duties. (7,9)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of financial support.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL)	Coordinates government and civil society activities concerning child labor. Led by the MOL and comprising representatives from 16 organizations, including international and civil society organizations. Assists in coordinating child labor investigations. (4,7) Seeks to reform national child labor laws and create a national child labor database, which would assist surveys on the extent of child labor issues in Liberia. (26) During the reporting period, and in addition to other trainings throughout the year, NACOMAL participated in a 2-day workshop along with civil society partners and NGOs, organized by the Winrock ATLAS Project, to design Standard Operating Procedures for the Child Labor Monitoring Systems at the district level in Liberia. NACOMAL also increased communication and trainings with other government agencies and NGOs to improve efforts to address child labor and human trafficking issues. (7) Despite these efforts, NACOMAL reported insufficient funding to pursue their mandates and continuing coordination issues remained, specifically with the anti-human trafficking task force. (5,7)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor	Aims to reduce child labor and the worst forms of child labor by 50 percent by 2030 through three strategic objectives, including increasing public awareness on the causes and consequences of the worst forms of child labor; strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks to reduce child labor; and increasing social services and protection for children of vulnerable households. (27)
National Action Plan for Trafficking in Persons (2019–2024)	Outlines the government's anti-trafficking efforts, including those for child victims, and creates benchmark goals related to human trafficking. (8,28) Establishes roles and responsibilities for coordinating government assistance to human trafficking victims and provides shelter and care to children who may have been victims of human trafficking. (28)
National Child Welfare, Social Welfare, and Protection Policy	Focuses on the implementation and enforcement of existing child protection laws and prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that aim to assist children subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking. (29)

Child labor elimination and prevention strategies are not included in the Revised National Youth Policy, the Education Sector Plan, the Rubber Industry Master Plan, nor the National Employment Policy. (18,30-33)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaign†	Aims to raise public awareness of human trafficking through the use of radio and billboard messages. During the reporting period, with international support, Liberian security agencies conducted events for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, which included trainings on human trafficking for security officials. (7)
Shelters‡	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection-operated shelters for vulnerable street children in Lofa and Nimba Counties. (6,22) During the reporting period, the Government of Liberia provided additional financial resources for the establishment of a new shelter for survivors of child labor and human trafficking. (7)
U.S. Government-Funded Projects	Projects that aim to improve access to education and improve child protection. Includes the USAID School Feeding Program II and the McGovern-Dole International Food For Education and Child Nutrition Program, implemented by USDA. (22,35) In addition, the International Development Law Organization, with funding from the USDOS Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, strengthened the capacity of 170 law enforcement officers from the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency, Liberia Immigration Service, LNP, MOJ, and MOL on trafficking in persons prevention and response. (4)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Liberia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (36)

Although the government funds social programs, they are not sufficient to address all sectors in which child labor occurs, including in domestic work, the production of rubber and timber, and the mining of gold and diamonds. (22)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Liberia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2022
	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that penalties for employing children under the minimum age for work are stringent enough to deter violations.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted in all sectors in which children work.	2016 – 2022
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for child labor violations.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate's complaint and referral mechanism is adequately supported and operational.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure adequate funding for child labor enforcement agencies, such as the Ministry of Labor, the Liberia National Police, and the Women and Children Protection Section, and provide necessary training for such officials to enforce child labor laws.	2010 – 2022
	Disaggregate the child endangerment cases prosecuted through the Ministry of Justice to determine the number of cases related to the worst forms of child labor.	2016 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure adequate funding for the National Commission on Child Labor's program activities to address child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that coordinating bodies, including the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, are implementing effective case referral mechanisms.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into relevant policies.	2010 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Collect and publish comprehensive research data to determine child labor activities and to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Improve access to education by subsidizing school-related costs, and reduce barriers to education by building additional schools, hiring more rural teachers, providing sufficient learning materials, addressing sexual abuse in schools, and providing adequate transportation.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that children do not leave school before the completion of compulsory education.	2017 – 2022
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, especially in forced domestic work, the production of rubber, commercial sexual exploitation, and the mining of gold and diamonds.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Madagascar made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government launched a new national action plan on trafficking in persons, and the Regional Committee in the Fight Against Child Labor of Fianarantsoa conducted field visits to markets, brickmaking sites, and stone quarries to monitor child labor and raise awareness among parents. In 2022, for the first time in several years, the Ministry of Labor also compiled reports from 11 of its regional offices on child labor-related activities between 2019 and 2021, which identified 922 children working in various sectors. Finally, the government expanded daily school meals from roughly 1,200 to 2,209 public primary schools. Although Madagascar made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas, the government failed to investigate reports of some officials accepting bribes to produce and issue false identity documents to facilitate the commercial sexual exploitation of minors. Children in Madagascar are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the mica mining sector and in agriculture, including in the production of vanilla. Limited resources for the enforcement of child labor laws may impede government efforts to protect children from the worst forms of child labor, and Madagascar does not have a current national action plan for the elimination of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Madagascar. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	43.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	33.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		63.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of vanilla and rice† (3-5)
	Fishing and deep-sea diving,† including for lobster (5,6)
Industry	Mining† gold, sapphires, quartz, mica, and tourmaline, and transporting† blocks and stones at mining sites (5-10)
	Quarrying† and crushing† stone and making gravel (6,11,12)
	Brickmaking† (5,12)
	Sorting and processing mica, sometimes using sharp tools and carrying heavy loads (5,8,13)
Services	Street work, including begging, washing cars, market vending, transporting goods, cleaning the marketplace, and scavenging garbage (5,11,14,15)
	Working as waitresses and maids at hotels and restaurants (11)
	Domestic work† (5,6,12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,11,15,16)
	Forced labor in mining, fishing, quarrying, begging, and domestic work (6,11,15,16)
	Use in the production of pornography (5,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Madagascar

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Children in Madagascar perform dangerous tasks in mining and agriculture, including in the mining of mica and the production of vanilla. (3,5,17) Recent reports indicate that an estimated 10,000 children work in the mica sector, including in digging mine shafts, underground mining, hoisting loads of mica out of mines, and collecting mica waste. (5,8,11,13,17) Children also sort mica at sorting companies that prepare mica for export. (8) In addition, children are involved in mining gold, sapphires, and various crystals and gems. (9) Children in the mining sector experience hazards including work in extreme heat, carrying heavy loads and using sharp tools, underground work without proper safety equipment or sufficient oxygen, and exposure to dust and other particles. (5,6,8,9,11,16) In northern Madagascar, children engage in smallholder vanilla farming, which exposes them to long working hours and sharp tools. (3,4,11) There are also reports that children are increasingly recruited by adults to steal vanilla because they are less likely to be pursued by security forces, or subjected to mob retaliation. (18)




Children in Madagascar are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, including child sex tourism and use in the production of pornography, domestic servitude, and forced begging. (5,6,16) Sources indicate that some local government officials issue false identity documents to minors in exchange for bribes to facilitate child commercial sexual exploitation. (5,16,19) Family members also sometimes encourage and facilitate the commercial sexual exploitation of children in tourist locations, cities, vanilla-growing regions, and mining areas. (5,7,14-16,20) Traffickers also use children in the production of pornography, including livestream performances, in exchange for international money transfers. (5,11,15,16) In addition, child domestic workers are subjected to harsh working conditions, including long hours, poor accommodations, and low salaries, and face a higher risk of sexual abuse or commercial sexual exploitation. (5-7,11,21)

Extreme weather events, including cyclones in early 2022 and several years of droughts in the southern region of Madagascar, have exacerbated food insecurity and poverty, increasing children's vulnerability to labor exploitation. In 2022, half of the population of southern Madagascar faced acute food insecurity, while half a million people were acutely malnourished. (15,19,22) Access to education is often limited for some children, which also increases their vulnerability to child labor. The birth registration system is not uniformly enforced, and unregistered children typically are not eligible to take official exams. (5,23) While the constitution guarantees free compulsory education, some public schools require parents to pay informal fees to subsidize teacher salaries and operating costs. (5,8,24) In addition, some girls face difficulties remaining in school due to a lack of appropriate hygiene facilities and menstrual hygiene products. (5,23) Additional barriers to education include a lack of school infrastructure, insufficient numbers of teachers, food insecurity, and limited transportation to schools in rural areas. (5,23)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Madagascar has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 24 of the Constitution; Article 100 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of Decree 2018-009 (24-26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 101 of the Labor Code; Article 10 of Decree 2007-563 (25,27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 101 of the Labor Code; Articles 10, 12, and 16–22 of Decree 2007-563; Article 19 of Decree 2018-009 (25-27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 4 of the Labor Code; Articles 1, 8, and 18 of Law 2014-040; Article 15 of Decree 2007-563; Articles 333 and 335 of Law 2007-038; Article 19 of Decree 2018-009 (25-27,29,30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 15 and 23 of Decree 2007-563; Articles 333 and 335 of Law 2007-038; Articles 1, 6, 8, 13, and 22 of Law 2014-040 (27,29,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 13, 23, and 24 of Decree 2007-563; Article 335 of Law 2007-038; Article 1 of Law 2014-040 (27,29,30)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 11, 14, and 23 of Decree 2007-563 (27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 11 of Ordinance No. 78-002 (31)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 11 of Ordinance No. 78-002 (31)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 15 and 23 of Decree 2007-563 (27)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16‡	Article 24 of the Constitution; Article 39 of Law 2008-011 (24,28)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 24 of the Constitution (24)

* Country has no conscription (31)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (28)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Civil Services and Labor's Division for the Prevention, Abolition, and Monitoring of Child Labor	Enforces child labor laws, coordinates and evaluates efforts to eliminate child labor, and oversees national and regional child labor coordination committees. (5,32)
Ministry of Justice	Enforces laws pertaining to violence against children, including human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (5,32) Works with department-level courts to prosecute child labor cases. (5)
Criminal Investigation Agencies	The Ministry of National Defense's National Gendarmerie enforces laws in rural areas, while the Ministry of Public Security's National Civil Police Force Morals and Minors Brigade enforces laws in urban areas. Investigate criminal cases involving minors, including cases related to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the worst forms of child labor. (5,15,16,32)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Madagascar took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Civil Services and Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial and human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$27,000 (11)	\$14,600 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	190 (11)	187 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (25)	Yes (5)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (25)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (11)

In June 2022, the ILO provided training to 30 labor inspectors as part of its Vision Zero Fund project on how to identify cases of the worst forms of child labor. (5) In 2022, for the first time in several years, the Ministry of Labor compiled reports from 11 of its regional offices on child labor-related activities between 2019 and 2021. They were able to identify 922 children working in various sectors, including domestic work, artisanal mining, begging, street work, quarrying, brickmaking, cattle herding, agriculture, restaurants, and firewood cutting and selling. (5) The Ministry of Labor also reported that between November 2021 and April 2022, it inspected 230 companies. However, the government did not provide comprehensive information for the 2022 reporting year on the number or types of inspections conducted, violations found, or penalties imposed and collected for inclusion in this report. (5)

Research indicates that Madagascar does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (5,33) Four labor inspectors are mandated to coordinate anti-child labor efforts. (5) The government itself has noted that the current number of inspectors is insufficient, indicating that its labor inspectors are not even able to cover the formal sector, much less the informal sector, in which most child labor occurs. Labor inspectors are also not permitted to enter private homes without coordination with the judicial police, which restricts their ability to conduct labor inspections among domestic workers, many of whom are children. (5) In addition, the concentration of labor inspectors in the capital, along with lack of funds for transportation at regional offices, hampers the enforcement of child labor laws in rural areas. (11) Even though the labor inspectorate has the authority to conduct proactive unannounced and routine inspections, in practice most inspections occur in response to complaints received. (11) While new labor inspectors undergo a 40-hour course on child labor, the Ministry of Labor considers this training inadequate as it does not cover child labor in the informal sector. (5) In addition, although Madagascar's list of hazardous occupations for children was expanded in 2018, reports indicate that the government was slow to disseminate the law's new requirements and has not taken steps to enforce it. (19)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Madagascar took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	63 (5,15)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	60 (15)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (11)	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (5)

In 2022, the National Police and Gendarmerie continued to collaborate with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation on a case that led to the conviction of an American offender for online sexual exploitation of underage Malagasy girls. (15) The Protection of Minors Police Service (PMPM) also identified 60 cases of child labor during their investigations, while the police cybercrime unit identified 3 cases of online sexual exploitation of children. (5) During the reporting period, PMPM investigators received training on trafficking in persons, including victim identification and referral. In addition, criminal investigators received trainings organized by UNICEF and Interpol on the online sexual exploitation of children. (5) Child protection networks managed by the Ministry of Population also provided support to child survivors of several types of abuse, including the worst forms of child labor, and coordinated across government entities on child protection issues in 2022. (5)

However, research found there is a lack of funding, equipment, and transportation at all levels of government to adequately conduct criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor. (5,21,34) Trafficking cases involving children are often investigated as child abuse, and thus outside the purview of courts with human trafficking expertise. In addition, criminal appeals procedures often result in suspects being released from custody, and eventually evading imprisonment. (34)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Council to Combat Child Labor (CNLTE)	Coordinates programs and advises on child labor legislation and regulations. (14,35) Complements efforts of regional committees, which work in each of Madagascar's regions to identify activities to promote the elimination of child labor, and gather data as well as coordinate, monitor, and evaluate efforts. (5,11) During the reporting period, both the national and regional child labor committees held awareness-raising activities and events, including radio and television programming. (5) The regional committee of Fianarantsoa in the Matsiara Ambony region also conducted field visits to markets, brickmaking sites, and stone quarries to monitor child labor and raise awareness among parents. Finally, the regional child labor committee of Tolagnaro, which covers the Anosy region, convened a coordinating meeting in June 2022 for NGOs implementing child labor prevention programs, including those working to address child labor in the mica sector. (5) The CNLTE and regional committees lack sufficient funding to effectively operate and coordinate efforts to address child labor. (5,7,36)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a national policy covering all worst forms of child labor.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Joint Action Plan to Address Issues Affecting Children and Households in Mica Exploitation in the Anosy Region	Developed through a joint initiative between the Ministries of Mines, Labor, and Population, aims to reduce child labor in the production of mica in the southern region. (5,37) During the reporting period, a working group continued to organize relevant ministries and organizations to define stakeholders' roles and duties in the implementation of the action plan. (5)
National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons†	Outlines strategy and policy to address trafficking in persons in Madagascar. In December 2022, the government officially launched the policy. (15)
Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children in the Tourism Industry	Aims to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry. Implemented by the Ministry of Tourism and supported by ILO and UNICEF. (38) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Tourism held a workshop in Antananarivo to validate the updated version of the code. (5,15)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Madagascar's National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor expired in 2019, and the government has not adopted a new action plan. (5)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Social Support and Reintegration Centers‡	Government programs that provide social and reintegration services for survivors of child labor exploitation. Include the Ministry of Labor's Manjary Soa Center, which provides educational support and other services to survivors of child labor. The Center for Emergency Shelter Service (<i>Centre d'Accueil d'Urgence</i>) in Antananarivo assists children referred by the police, including children exploited in domestic work and other urban sectors. (6,11,16) During the reporting period, the Manjary Soa Center hosted 35 children removed from child labor or who were at risk of the worst forms of child labor. (5)
Elimination of Child Labor in Madagascar's Mica Sector	Targets child labor in the mica sector in southern Madagascar by removing children from mines, facilitating education access for survivors of child labor, improving the mica supply chain, and providing families with income-generating alternatives. Implemented by Terre des Hommes, Netherlands. (17) During the reporting period, Terre des Hommes held the in-country project launch event in Fort Dauphine, and participants included representatives from the government, UNICEF, and mica exporters. (39)
Education and School Canteen Programs	Programs to provide access to meals in school and re-integrate out-of-school children into the education system. Include school canteen programs coordinated with the Ministry of National Education, and funded by partners including the World Food Program and the World Bank; <i>Mavitrika Mianata</i> , a school canteen program run by Catholic Relief Services and Global Communities with funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and remedial classes, run by the Ministry of Education with UNICEF support, to reintegrate out-of-school children back into the public school system. (5) During the reporting year, the government expanded daily school meals from roughly 1,200 to 2,209 public primary schools across the country, and 1,200 children received remedial classes through the Ministry of Education. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Madagascar.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (5,11,32,40)

Although Madagascar has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to address the extent of the problem, particularly in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, forced begging, and mining.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Madagascar (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish complete labor law enforcement information related to child labor, including the number and types of labor inspections conducted, the number of violations found, and penalties imposed and collected during the reporting year.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors receive adequate training on child labor in the informal sector and the 2018 updated hazardous work list.	2019 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 187 to 387 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 15.5 million people.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives adequate funding, including for transportation, to conduct inspections in rural areas and the informal sector.	2009 – 2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement data on the number of convictions and if penalties were imposed for violations concerning the worst forms of child labor.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies have sufficient staff, equipment, and transportation to address the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal offenses related to the worst forms of child labor are investigated and prosecuted under the relevant laws.	2020 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Council to Combat Child Labor and regional child labor committees received adequate funding to carry out their mandates.	2014 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a national policy to address child labor, including its worst forms.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including those in rural communities, by removing informal fees; improving school infrastructure, feeding programs, staffing, and transportation services; providing access to sanitation facilities and feminine hygiene products; and increasing birth registration rates.	2011 – 2022
	Expand the scope of programs to address child labor in agriculture, domestic work, begging, mining, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2014 – 2022

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In 2022, Malawi made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Criminal law enforcement officials increased the number of convictions related to the worst forms of child labor and participated in ten trainings on laws protecting children from child labor. In addition, Malawi's Ministry of Labor began piloting a child labor monitoring system to enhance data collection, identification of working children through school attendance data, and improve coordination within the tobacco sector. However, children in Malawi are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in the farming of tobacco and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Despite its legal abolition, many families are still working under the tenancy system, which frequently leads to these families and their children falling into situations of debt bondage. In addition, minimum age protections do not cover children working in domestic households or non-commercial farms.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Malawi.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	26.3 (1,456,305)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	83.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	28.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		89.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Integrated Household Survey (IHS), 2020. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of tea and household crops (3-5)
	Planting and harvesting tobacco,† including land preparation, weeding, harvesting, and shelling (3,5-8)
	Herding livestock (5,9)
	Fishing (5)
Industry	Brickmaking† (9)
	Construction† (5,9)
Services	Domestic work (5,10-12)
	Begging† (5)
	Vending (5,12-14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5,15-17)
	Forced labor in herding goats and cattle, farming including tobacco, fishing, brickmaking, domestic work, and work in small businesses such as rest houses and bars (3,5,17-20)
	Forced begging (17)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children in Malawi are engaged in hazardous work in the production of tobacco. (18,21-23) Children who handle tobacco risk illness from nicotine absorption, including green tobacco sickness. (22,24) They are also exposed to pesticides, chemicals, and harsh weather conditions. (22) Some children work alongside family members who are

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tenants on tobacco farms. (22,25,26) In the tenancy system, the quantity and quality of the tobacco sold to farm owners after the harvest season determines the pay tenants receive, incentivizing parents to use their children as workers to increase their earnings. Tenants often incur loans from farm owners during the growing season; in many cases they are unable to repay these debts, resulting in tenants, and often their families, falling into debt bondage. (25,27) Although the government legally abolished the tenancy system in 2021, research indicates the continued exploitation of children in conditions of forced labor related to the production of tobacco, indicating the need for targeted government programs and interventions to support the transition of tenant farmers and their families to alternative systems of livelihood. (7) In 2022, the government, with support from the ILO, conducted a survey, including validation of data, to provide quantitative information on the tenancy system to inform future programming and policy reforms. (28) The UN reported that a large number of children working on tobacco farms have remained out of school since the COVID-19 pandemic. (7)

Although primary education is tuition-free, considerable barriers to education exist, including families' inability to pay required school-related expenses, such as books and uniforms. (18,29,30) In addition, long distances, a lack of teachers, safety concerns related to sexual violence within schools, poor school infrastructure, and the lack of desks, water, electricity, feminine hygiene products, and sanitation facilities also negatively impact children's attendance at school. (10,11,18,23,30,31) Orphaned children and children with family members with HIV/AIDS may need to assume responsibility as heads of their households, including working to support their families. These children, especially those who become orphaned, are at increased risk of leaving school early and entering into the worst forms of child labor. (32,33) Moreover, rural households are particularly vulnerable to both economic and climate shocks, likely contributing to the use of child workers as a coping strategy. (29)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Malawi has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Malawi's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including lack of legal protections for children working in private homes and on farms.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Section 21 of the Employment Act (34)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 22 of the Employment Act; Section 23 of the Constitution (34,35)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Sections 1–9 and Paragraph 6 of the Employment (Prohibition of Hazardous Work for Children) Order (36)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 4 of the Employment Act (2021); Section 27 of the Constitution; Sections 140–147 and 257–269 of the Penal Code; Sections 79 and 82 of the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act; Sections 2 and 14–16 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (35,37-40)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 140–147 and 257–269 of the Penal Code; Section 79 of the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act; Sections 2, 15, and 16 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (38-40)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 137, 138, 140, 142, 147, and 155 of the Penal Code; Sections 23 and 84 of the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act; Sections 15 and 20 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (38-40)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 19 of the Defense Force Act (41)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Article 13 of the Education Act (42)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 2 and 13 of the Education Act (42)

* Country has no conscription (41)

Section 21 of the Employment Act sets the minimum age for employment at age 14 for agricultural, industrial, or non-industrial work. (34) The Act, however, exempts work performed in homes and non-commercial farms, leaving children working at these sites without minimum age protections. (34,43) The minimum working age also is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (42) In addition, Malawian law does not have criminal provisions for the use of children in illicit activities, such as the selling of drugs. Furthermore, although non-state armed groups are not known to recruit children for military activities in the country, Malawi law does not meet international standards because it does not explicitly prohibit this practice. (44)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Performs inspections and investigates all labor complaints, including those related to child labor and child trafficking. (5) Through its Child Labor Unit, monitors and implements child labor law compliance through child labor monitoring visits. (18,45) Coordinates with the Ministry of Homeland Security and the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MGCDSW) to conduct investigations and refer children for social services. (18) District child labor offices enforce child labor and human trafficking laws at the district level, including monitoring child labor data and school attendance. (18) With support from the Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco foundation, a tobacco industry-funded foundation for elimination of child labor, MOL is piloting a Child Labor Monitoring System to strengthen data collection, improve identification of working children through school attendance data, and enhance coordination. (5)
The Malawi Police Service and Ministry of Justice	Investigate child labor and forced labor cases. Prosecute criminal offenders of the worst forms of child labor through MOL. (5) Coordinate with the Ministry of Homeland Security on child trafficking cases, particularly those involving a cross-border dimension. (5)
Tobacco Commission	Oversees regulation of the tobacco industry and enforcement of the Tobacco Industry Bill, including child labor issues. Receives annual reports from tobacco growers on child labor issues in their supply chains, including efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor, and may impose penalties, including canceling the registration of growers who fail to satisfactorily report on child labor in their annual reports to the Commission. (18,46)

Malawi

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Malawi took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (18)	\$100,000 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (18)	165 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (18,34)	No (34)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (18)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	676 (47)	307 (48)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	111 (47)	700 (48)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	14 (18)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (18)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (18)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (18)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (34)	Yes (34)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (18)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (18)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Yes (5)

Under Malawian law, child labor is a criminal offense, and as such, labor investigators refer violations related to child labor to criminal law enforcement authorities for investigation and the imposition of penalties. (34) Research indicates that Malawi does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors, vehicles, and other material resources to carry out their mandated duties, particularly in the agricultural sector in which child labor is particularly prevalent. (5,49) Moreover, to increase monitoring of the tobacco sector, MOL and tobacco companies have a memorandum of understanding that includes industry support for training of labor inspectors and financing of labor inspections on tobacco farms, such as covering transportation costs to inspection sites. (18,50) The agreement also establishes a complaint mechanism by which field technicians working for tobacco companies report child labor findings to labor officers for follow-up investigation and response. (50,51)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Malawi took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Malawi Police Service that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inappropriate detention of victims of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (18)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	3 (5)	3 (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	3 (5)	3 (5)
Number of Convictions	1 (5)	3 (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (18)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Yes (5)

The government does not operate a hotline; rather, it works with a local NGO that operates a 24-hour National Helpline Service. During the reporting period, the NGO received 119 calls related to human trafficking, of which 51 pertained to children. (18) In 2022, the Malawi Police Service offered three trainings for new criminal investigators, and ten trainings on laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (5) Although the government provided some information on investigations, it generally does not provide disaggregated information on the ages

of human trafficking victims or the nature of exploitation, which may lead to gaps in the coordination between agencies and the ability of rehabilitation services to account for the special needs of children. (8)

Many children in Malawi lack birth certificates. The inability of law enforcement officials to verify the ages of child survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation may have impeded efforts to prosecute traffickers under the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, and the Trafficking in Persons Act. (52) In addition, police sometimes arrest and detain child sex trafficking survivors alongside adults. In some instances, these children fall victim to abuse, including sexual extortion, by the police. (18,53)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of clarity of institutional mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on Child Labor (NSCCL)	Provides policy guidance to support the elimination of child labor and implementation of the National Action Plan on Child Labor. Chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture, with MOL acting as the main technical advisor and secretariat, and includes representatives from government ministries, including Homeland Security and MGCDSW, as well as trade unions, employers, development partners, and civil society organizations. (18,54,55) Local coordination of child labor and child welfare issues occurs through District and Community Child Labor Committees. (18,56,57) Although the government confirmed the NSCCL was active during the reporting period, it did not provide information on its activities to verify it is functioning according to its intended mandates. (5)

Although MOL officials and the District and Community Child Labor Committees receive training on child labor issues, there is lack of standard guidance related to child labor definitions and concepts, which results in lapses in coordination on identifying and responding to children in child labor. (51)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including insufficient mainstreaming of child labor issues into relevant national policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan on Child Labor (2020–2025)	Outlines the government's strategies for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor, with a focus on six critical areas: (1) laws and policy; (2) the institutional and human resource capacity of stakeholders involved in child labor elimination; (3) public education and awareness; (4) prevention, withdrawal, rehabilitation, and social re-integration of children in child labor; (5) mitigating HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses; and (6) improving the availability of information on child labor. (58)
National Child Labor Mainstreaming Guide	Provides guidance to government ministries, departments, and agencies, as well as other social partners in addressing child labor through integration of child labor elimination strategies into key policies. Aims to also enhance responsive planning and service delivery, and multi-sectoral collaboration in addressing child labor. (49,59)
National Children's Policy (2019–2025)	Aims to facilitate the coordination of policies related to the needs of children to ensure child protection, with an emphasis on prevention of child labor and human trafficking. (5,18,60)

‡The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (5,57)

Research indicates that the government continued to support key national policies, but could not determine specific activities undertaken to implement them during the reporting period; financial constraints limit the scope and implementation of national policies. (5) In addition, the Government of Malawi has adopted a National Youth Policy and a National Education Sector Plan. However, child labor elimination and prevention strategies have not been integrated into these policies, despite their potential impact on child labor. (61,62)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including lack of implementation of programs.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
National Social Cash Transfer Program†	MGCDSSW-led program that supports low-income families in high-risk districts to enable children to stay in school and prevent child labor. (18,51) As of September 2022, the program provided monthly/bi-monthly cash transfers to approximately 300,000 households, benefiting around 1.4 million individuals. (5) An evaluation of the National Social Cash Transfer Program found that, although the program provided benefits for other aspects of children's well-being, it had achieved little reduction of child labor as the work of children only shifted from external employment to labor within the household, due to families using funds from the program to expand their household agricultural activities. (63) In 2022, the government published an updated strategic plan to support the Social Cash Transfer Program, which outlines plans for increasing coverage of social protection support, improving the sensitivity of the program to address vulnerabilities and respond to economic shocks, strengthen delivery mechanisms and financing capacities, and develop mechanisms for regular adjustment of transfers to account for inflation. (64) The updated plan, however, does not include specific child labor elimination strategies to mitigate the issues raised in the program evaluation.
Education Assistance Programs‡	Government-funded programs to provide educational assistance and support for vulnerable families by addressing educational barriers contributing to child labor. (51) Includes the Complementary Basic Education Program, a \$1.1 million project that promotes school enrollment for children removed from child labor. (18) Also includes MGCDSSW's Early Childhood Development Program that provides services to 2.4 million children through preschools and parenting groups. (18) In 2022, the government planned 150 new Community Based Care Centers to expand preschool and early-childhood care facilities. (5)
Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Supply Chains in Africa (ACCEL)	Government of Netherlands-funded program, implemented by the ILO, totaling \$9.7 million, aimed at promoting employment, inclusive growth, and social protection; acceleration of progress towards Sustainable Development Goals; elimination of child labor; addressing decent work deficits in the tobacco sector; and other issues related to work and social protection. (65) During the reporting period, the ILO and the government participated in a planning workshop outlining Malawi's commitments and policy priorities as an Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country, prioritizing ratification and domestication of relevant international labor standards on child labor and forced labor. (66) The ILO also supported the Employer's Consultative Association of Malawi in developing and launching an updated employer's guide and code of conduct for child labor elimination. (67) Finally, ACCEL worked with the Tea Association of Malawi (TAML) to establish a compliance task force and district-level points of contact to support child labor monitoring among TAML members and smallholder farmers. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Malawi.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (5,51,68)

The government, with the European Union, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, provides ongoing support for programs to increase birth registration and data collection in various districts across the country. (69,70) However, although Malawi has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem in all relevant sectors, including in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Malawi (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all forms of children's work, including work conducted by children in homes and on non-commercial farms, receive legal protection, including a minimum age for work that complies with international standards.	2009 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 18 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Update the legal framework to explicitly criminalize the use of children by adults for illicit activities.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish information on the number of civil penalties imposed and collected for child labor violations.	2016 – 2022
	Increase human and material resources, such as vehicles, to the labor inspectorate to conduct regular labor inspections, particularly in the agricultural sector.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation do not fall victim to sexual extortion and are not arrested or detained.	2018 – 2022
	Maintain and publish disaggregated information on criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, including ages of exploited children and the nature of exploitation.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Standardize approaches for training and responding to child labor to strengthen coordination and case management among key stakeholders involved in the protection of children.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Steering Committee on Child Labor is operating according to its mandates and publish information about its activities.	2022
Government Policies	Ensure sufficient financial support and that activities are undertaken to implement national policies related to prevention and elimination of child labor and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2020 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Education Sector Plan and the National Youth Policy.	2011 – 2022
Social Programs	Develop social programs to support families and children transitioning from the tenancy system, including prevention of child labor.	2022
	Take measures to address barriers to education, including by defraying auxiliary educational costs, improving school infrastructure, increasing the number of teachers, increasing schools and transportation resources serving rural areas, and instituting mechanisms to address sexual violence occurring within schools.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that all children are registered at birth and increase efforts to register children who were not issued birth certificates.	2018 – 2022
	Support targeted programs that expand educational opportunities for orphan-headed households and families affected by HIV/AIDS.	2022
	Improve harmonization of child labor prevention and elimination measures into the National Social Cash Transfer Program to increase its effectiveness in preventing and removing children from child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Increase the scope of social programs to reach more children at risk of the worst forms of child labor and develop specific programs to target children in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.	2011 – 2022

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In 2022, Maldives made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government significantly increased the number of labor inspections from 124 inspections in 2021 to 656 in 2022. It also increased the budget for labor inspections and the number of labor inspectors from 23 to 32. Moreover, the government began conducting a baseline study on trafficking in persons throughout the country's atolls. However, children in Maldives are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work, illicit activities, and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in domestic work. Information on children's work is limited because a national survey on child labor has not been conducted. Laws in Maldives also do not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation because the use, procurement, and offering of a child for pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Maldives.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.9 (2,364)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	79.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		91.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2009. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3-8)
	Forced labor in domestic work (9)
	Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs (3,4,6,10)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Information on children's work is limited because a national survey on child labor has not been conducted. (11) Moreover, the prevalence of child labor may be higher due to the number of undocumented migrant children from Bangladesh and other South Asian countries in Maldives. Some undocumented migrant girls are reported to be targeted for commercial sexual exploitation by traffickers. (3,11,12) Maldivian children from the outer islands are brought to the capital, Malé, for domestic work. Once there, some of these children, including some from impoverished families, may be more vulnerable to sex or labor trafficking. (3,8,12) There are also reports of foreign tourists engaging in the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (7,13) Maldivian children, especially boys, are also forced by traffickers to engage in the transportation of drugs for criminal gangs. (3,8,14)

The right to free primary and secondary education is provided to all children, but there is a shortage of trained teachers, classrooms, as well as teachers and resources for students with disabilities, in Maldives. (11,14-17) Girls are less likely to be enrolled in lower secondary education than boys, increasing their risk to child labor. (8,14,18)

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In addition, while there are primary schools on all islands, some students must travel to other islands to attend secondary school. In these instances, some children participate in domestic work in exchange for room and board; however, this practice has decreased in recent years. (6,14)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Maldives has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Maldives' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to prohibit the use, procurement, and offering of a child for pornographic performances.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Sections 6 and 12 of the Employment Act; Article 26 of the Child Rights Protection Act; Section 8 of the General Regulation on Child Rights Protection (10,15,19,20)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 7 and 12 of the Employment Act (19)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 10 of the General Regulation on Child Rights Protection (10,20,21)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Section 3 of the Employment Act; Sections 10–14, 16–18, 21, and 25 of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act; Sections 3–8 and 11 of the 2nd Amendment to the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act; Article 25 of the Constitution; Sections 26 and 122 of the Child Rights Protection Act (15,16,19,22,23)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Sections 10–14, 17–18, and 21 of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act; Sections 3–8 and 11 of the 2nd Amendment to the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (22,23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 17–19 of the Special Provisions Act to Deal with Child Sex Abuse Offenders; Sections 11 and 123 of the Child Rights Protection Act; Sections 13, 14, 17, 18, and 21 of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act; Sections 4–8 and 11 of the 2nd Amendment to the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (15,22–24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 133(c)(1) of the Drugs Act; Article 122 of the Child Rights Protection Act (10,15,25)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Legislation title unknown
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 36(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives; Article 14 of the Education Act; Section 21 of the Child Rights Protection Act (15,16,26)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 36(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives; Article 5(b) of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children; Articles 17–20 of the Education Act (16,26,27)

* Country has no conscription (28)

The Second Amendment to the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act expressly criminalizes the trafficking of children across borders and internally for purposes of exploitation. (23) The definition of exploitation in the Act includes forced labor, forced marriages, and forced engagement in sexual activities or prostitution. (10,13,23,29) However, the laws prohibiting forced labor in Maldives are not sufficient overall as they do not criminalize slavery. Laws prohibiting child trafficking are also insufficient because they require the use of force, fraud or coercion for the crime of child trafficking. (22,23) Moreover, laws in Maldives do not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation, because the use, procurement, and offering of a child for pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. (15,23,24)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Labor Relations Authority, Ministry of Economic Development	Conducts labor inspections and issues fines for violations in accordance with the Employment Act. (10,19) All labor inspections look for child labor violations related to minimum age requirements as well as forced labor and hazardous work, but there are no officers dedicated to child labor issues. (10) Penalties can be assessed during or after inspections, but are not enforced during initial inspections. (11) If violations are identified, a timeline is given to rectify violations. Follow-up inspections are then conducted to check compliance with the recommendations of the Labor Relations Authority. (11) Penalties are imposed in the event of noncompliance. If the Labor Relations Authority identifies a child employed in violation of child labor laws during inspections, a referral letter is sent via government intranet to the Child and Family Protection Service, who then takes over the case. (11) Inspections are carried out based on a schedule published at the beginning of every year, with a focus on sectors and establishments that employ large numbers of employees and on establishments that have a history of cases filed with the Labor Relations Authority. During 2022, inspections were carried out in Greater Malé Area and in every atoll of the Maldives, including in tourist resorts and islands with larger populations. (11) Received nine recommendations from the Children's Ombudsperson on implementing monitoring mechanisms, formulating a standard operating procedure, and maintaining statistics. (30) Moreover, a 2-day training on human trafficking, human smuggling, and survivor assistance, including for child survivors of such cases, was conducted for 38 labor inspectors, including officers from the awareness unit. (11)
Maldives Police Service	The Family and Child Protection Department investigates complaints of child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Refers cases to the Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution and to the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Services to provide survivor services. (11) The Anti-Human Trafficking Department investigates human trafficking-related offenses and enforces laws prohibiting trafficking in persons, including cases of child trafficking. (6,13)
Prosecutor General's Office	Raises charges and oversees the conduct of criminal matters on behalf of the state, including for cases of child exploitation referred by the Maldives Police Service. (4,10) In cases regarding child exploitation and trafficking, a victim support officer from the Prosecutor General Office's Witness and Victims Support Service Unit and a prosecutor will join the case to identify imminent threats or probable risks and ensure the safety of the child survivor. (3,4)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Maldives took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Labor Relations Authority that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocations.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$44,419 (31)	\$116,731 (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	23 (10)	32 (11,30)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (19)	Yes (19)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	124 (10)	656 (11,30)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	14 (10)	24 (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (10)	0 (31)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (10)	0 (31)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (19)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10,32,33)	Yes (10,11,32,33)

During the reporting period, all cases of child labor that were identified occurred within the tourism industry. The Labor Relations Authority faced challenges in enforcement due to the insufficient number of labor inspectors and travel budget to regularly inspect the country's many islands, including outlying atolls, despite increased budget in 2022. (11,31) Moreover, inspectors used their own personal vehicles for transportation for inspections that occurred within the Greater Malé Area, as the budget did not cover vehicle acquisition cost. There were reports that Labor Relations Authority inspectors accepted bribes and that the Labor Relations Authority lacked the institutional independence from the Ministry of Economic Development to fulfill its mandate and was subject to influence by politicians. (3,11)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Maldives took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Family and Child Protection Department of the Maldives Police Service that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of resources for investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Number of Investigations	0 (33)	66 (31)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (10)	3 (31)
Number of Convictions	0 (10)	0 (31)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (10)	N/A (31)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (11)

In 2022, the Maldives Police Service did not report any investigations of commercial sexual exploitation of children, compared to investigating 291 incidents in the previous reporting period, including referring 115 cases for prosecution; the status of these 115 cases and whether the government initiated any prosecutions or achieved any convictions is unknown. (3) Sri Lankan police arrested a former senior Maldivian government official in July 2021 for alleged involvement in a child sex trafficking ring in Sri Lanka; however, the Maldivian government did not report an investigation of the case in 2022. Law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges' lack

of awareness, sensitization, and training on the differences between child labor cases and other labor-related cases, distinguishing between sex trafficking and sexual abuse of children, and the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act may have contributed to a lack of successful prosecutions. (3,11,29) Though some trainings covered aspects of child labor, prosecutors did not participate directly in trainings that specifically focused on child labor. (11) There were also concerns that traffickers could use resorts and guesthouses to facilitate commercial sexual exploitation of children during travel because no government agency has the authority or resources to monitor these establishments for such crimes. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of a coordination body to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Anti-Trafficking in Persons Office	Established at the Ministry of Defense to implement the Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan and undertake prevention efforts. (32) In 2022, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Office received a budget of \$64,850, implemented the 2021–2022 National Action Plan, and drafted the 2023–2024 National Action Plan. Moreover, the Office participated in several workshops and webinars on labor migration and human trafficking in the Maldives. (3,35)

Although Maldives has the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Office to coordinate efforts to address the trafficking of children, it does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan (2020–2022)	Established the government's goals to address human trafficking, including of children, by creating institutions, coordinating activities, raising awareness, and building capacity. (36) During the reporting period, began conducting a baseline study on human trafficking throughout the country's atolls, reviewed draft Victim Assistance and Shelter Service regulations, and held workshops for law enforcement officials. (11,35)

NGOs have stated that the lack of cohesive standard operating procedures delineating specific roles for all agencies, as well as procedures referring survivors to care and support services, may have resulted in a lack of referrals and the possibility that survivors were not identified, given the large number of migrant workers present in the country and the small number of survivors identified. (3,29) Research found no evidence of a policy designed to address other relevant forms of child labor, such as forced labor in domestic work or drug trafficking.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Family and Children's Service Centers†	Nineteen Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Services-operated centers that provide psychosocial support for child survivors of abuse and exploitation, four of which provide temporary shelter for survivors. (4,37) However, Family and Children's Service Centers and shelters lack adequate financial and human resources, and staff are inadequately trained to deal with cases involving abused and exploited children. (37) While reported to be active during the reporting period, research was unable to determine which activities were undertaken. (11,38)
National Victim Support Hotline (Number 1696)†	A 24-hour hotline dedicated to receiving reports of human trafficking and child labor. Formerly operated by the Maldives Police Service, but is in the process of being relocated to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Office. (33) During the reporting period, the hotline was suspended due to lack of staff, resulting in the Maldives Police Service's Anti-Trafficking Department operating a temporary hotline to address this need. (3,35)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Maldives.

A temporary shelter for human trafficking survivors was closed, but two survivors in need of services were provided temporary shelter in guesthouses. (35) Existing social programs do not specifically address commercial sexual exploitation of children, use of children for drug trafficking, or forced labor in domestic work. Furthermore, no actions were taken to reduce demand for commercial sex or commercial sexual exploitation of children during travel during the reporting period. (11,29)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Maldives (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that laws prohibiting child trafficking do not require the use of force, fraud and coercion.	2021 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children, including procuring, offering, and using children for pornographic performances.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the Labor Relations Authority has institutional independence from the Ministry of Economic Development to fulfill its mandate and is not subject to influence from politicians.	2022
	Ensure that investigators have the resources necessary, including transportation and adequate number of staff, to enforce laws on the worst forms of child labor.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges receive training on the appropriate handling of child labor, sex trafficking, and sexual abuse cases, as well as the proper application of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act to cases.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that government officials are investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted for involvement in the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2022
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to prevent and eliminate all worst forms of child labor.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy to address all relevant forms of child labor and forced child labor, including domestic work and drug trafficking.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that adequate standard operating procedures for victim identification and referral, as well as the provision of needed victim services, are developed and effectively implemented.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Conduct and publish a national child labor survey that includes both Maldivian and migrant children.	2009 – 2022
	Improve access to secondary education, particularly for girls, by ensuring adequate resources, secondary schools, and number of teachers, including for students with disabilities.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information about activities undertaken to implement social programs, including the Child Helpline and Family and Children's Service Centers.	2017 – 2022

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Provide sufficient funding, human resources, and staff training for Family and Children's Service Centers and shelters that serve abused and exploited children.	2018 – 2022
	Implement and provide sufficient resources for programs that address the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children, use of children for drug trafficking, and forced labor in domestic work.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that adequate victim referral mechanisms, including the National Victim Support Hotline, are established, operational, and sufficiently staffed.	2021 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Mali made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The transition government recruited three additional labor inspectors. However, despite this initiative to address child labor, Mali is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. The transition government used children in its armed forces during the reporting period in violation of national law. Children in Mali are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in hereditary slavery and in armed conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in the production of cotton and rice, and in artisanal gold mining. Although Mali's 2012 Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes trafficking for the purpose of slavery, it does not more broadly criminalize the act of slavery. Malian law also does not explicitly prohibit using, procuring, or offering children for illicit activities, and allows children under the age of 18 to be penalized for acts they were forced to commit as a direct result of being recruited and used by armed groups. In addition, Mali lacks a national action plan to address all worst forms of child labor that exist in the country, and social and rehabilitation services remain inadequate for child labor victims.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mali.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

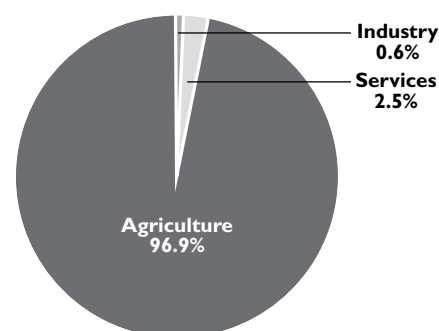
Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	30.4 (1,891,233)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	50.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	19.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		49.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: Enquete Modulaire et Permanente Aupres des Menages, 2020. (2)

These data are not comparable with data presented in last year's report due to changes in survey source, survey questionnaire, or age range surveyed.

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Cultivating,† harvesting,† ginning,† processing, transporting,† and applying chemical fertilizers,† particularly in the production of cotton and rice (3-9)
	Raising livestock,† including oxen and small ruminants (4-6,8,9)
	Fishing,† including collection, throwing nets, and piloting small boats (5,10)
Industry	Artisanal gold mining,† including digging shafts,† extracting ore from underground tunnels,† crushing ore,† and amalgamating ore with mercury† (6,11-14)
	Rock quarrying† (4)

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Assembling fishing canoes† (5,8)
	Construction† (6)
Services	Domestic work† (6,9)
	Street work,† including market vending,† begging,† and in the transportation sector (5,6,8,15,16)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in artisanal mining, domestic work, street work, production of salt, and farming (including in the production of rice) (3,4,6,7,17,18)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,9,15)
	Forced recruitment of children by state armed groups for use in armed conflict (9,19,20)
	Hereditary slavery (3,9,16,21)
	Forced begging by Koranic teachers (6,7,9)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the trafficking of drugs (4,6,9)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

There was an increase in the worst forms of child labor in Mali due to insecurity from armed conflict and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in 2022. (9) During the reporting year, non-state armed groups forcibly recruited and used children as combatants and in support capacities. (9) Non-state armed groups also controlled some artisanal gold mines in northern Mali and used children for forced labor at those locations. (4,10,22) In addition, despite the Ministry of Defense banning the military from recruiting and using children under the age of 18 in armed conflict in 2020, the Armed Forces of Mali (FAMa) used children in its forces during the reporting period. (19,23)

Children, especially from the Bellah community, are subject to hereditary slavery in northern and southwestern Mali. (6,9,10,24) Some children are born into slavery, while others are born free but remain in dependent status. As a result, these children, along with their parents, are forced to work for their parents' former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. (24) Enslaved children perform agricultural or domestic labor and are often sexually abused. (24) In addition, research indicates that children were abducted from Timbuktu and Gossi to be used as slaves during the reporting period. (9) Children, particularly those of Songhai ethnicity, also work in debt bondage in the northern salt mines of Taoudenni. (24) Moreover, as many as 45,753 children in the north, south, and west are also involved in artisanal gold mining, in which they are exposed to toxic substances and extreme temperatures, transport heavy loads of water and minerals, and work long hours. (4,6,9,14,22) Around mining sites, children also are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, and are involved in trafficking narcotics. (4,6,9) Many of the children working in mines are from neighboring countries in the region. (6,9)

Some boys placed in the care of Koranic teachers for education are forced by their teachers to beg on the street or work in fields, after which they must surrender the money that they have earned to their teachers. (3,9,24) Research indicates that children forced to beg were not only from Mali, but also from neighboring countries, including Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire. (4,6) While the transition government frequently encounters cases of child begging, it does not have the capacity or the appropriate facilities to provide shelter and social services to these children, given the widespread nature of this issue in the country. (4,6,9)

The Constitution guarantees free and compulsory education for citizens; however, many children, especially girls, do not attend school because parents are expected to pay fees for registration, uniforms, transportation costs, and supplies, as well as teachers' additional salary payments, all of which are cost prohibitive for many impoverished families. (3,6,8,15,25,26) Long distances between villages and schools, and lack of schools, classes, and teachers, are also significant barriers to education. (4,6) In addition, many children in Mali are not registered at birth, which may prevent them from accessing services such as education. (3,15,25,27) Research indicates that there are hundreds of thousands of children in Mali without birth certificates, and that while lack of documentation does not exclude children from schooling, these students may not be allowed to take national exams. (4,6) Evidence also suggests that incidences of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, including corporal




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punishment, prevent some children from remaining in school. (16,25) Furthermore, internally displaced children faced interruptions in their education and barriers to enrolling in school after fleeing their homes. (4,6) Ongoing insecurity and attacks on schools have resulted in as many as 1,731 school closures by 2022. (20,28)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mali has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The transition government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mali's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of criminal penalties for crimes related to the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 326 of the Labor Code; Article L.187 of the Law 2017-021 modifying the Labor Code (29,30)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Hazardous Occupations List; Article 1 of the 2017-4388 Amendment to Hazardous Occupations List; Articles 326 and D.189.14 of the Labor Code (29,31,32)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations List; Article 1 of the 2017-4388 Amendment to Hazardous Occupations List; Article 189 of the Labor Code (29,31,32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article L.6 of the Law 2017-021 modifying the Labor Code; Article 1 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (30,33)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 244 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 63 of the Child Protection Code (33-35)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 228 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 57 of the Child Protection Code (33-35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 183 of the Penal Code; Articles 18 and 50 of the Child Protection Code (34,35)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 17 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 31.23 and 31.31 of the Penal Code; Article 5 of the Military General Statute (34-36)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 17 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 31.23 and 31.31 of the Penal Code; Article 5 of the Military General Statute (34-36)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Articles 31.23, 31.31, and 32 of the Penal Code (34)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 26 and 34 of the Law of Education (37)
Free Public Education	No		Article 18 of the Constitution; Article 4 of the Law of Education (26,37)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (34)

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The Education Law only formally guarantees the right of education for citizens. (37) Articles 189.35 and 189.36 of the Labor Code allow children between the ages of 12 and 14 to perform domestic or light seasonal work, as long as it does not impede school attendance or exceed 4.5 hours of work per day. (29) However, Mali's light work framework does not meet international standards because it applies to children under the age of 13 and does not specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken. (30,38) Although Mali's Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes human trafficking for the purpose of slavery, it does not more broadly criminalize the act of slavery, and Mali's Labor Code, while prohibiting forced labor generally, does not specifically prohibit hereditary slavery. In addition, Malian law does not prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs as established by international standards. (15,21,33,35)

While the Child Protection Code provides protection for children under age 18, and the Penal Code establishes criminal penalties for several forms of child labor, some offenses included in the Child Protection Code do not carry criminal penalties, such as the prohibition of child recruitment by non-state armed groups. (34,35,39) Moreover, although the Child Protection Code prohibits children under age 18 from participating in armed conflicts or joining the national armed forces, it only provides for imprisonment of those who recruit children in cases of repeat offenses. Meanwhile, the Penal Code only provides criminal penalties for child recruitment if the children recruited are under age 15. (34,35) Article 28 of the Penal Code states that crimes committed out of self-defense or under a force that could not be resisted should not be penalized as prescribed in other articles of the Penal Code. Although a 2013 Interministerial Circular on the Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers states that Article 28 of the Penal Code is applicable to children involved in armed conflict, the Circular does not define the age range of the children it covers. (34,40) This means that some children under age 18 who are affiliated with non-state armed groups may be penalized for crimes they were forced to commit as a direct result of being a victim of child labor. (34,40)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The transition government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Civil Service and Social Dialogue (MOL)	Enforces labor laws and investigates Labor Code infractions, including those regarding child labor. (8,9,25) Chairs the National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE), which coordinates Mali's efforts to eliminate child labor and includes representatives from other government ministries, civil society, and worker and employer organizations. (8,15,41,42) One labor inspector in each region is designated as the point of contact for CNLTE staff to facilitate regional coordination. (3,4,15,43) During the reporting period, CNLTE only received 25 percent of its budget. The available funds it received were insufficient to cover its facilities and transportation needs. (9)
Ministry of Justice's Special Judicial Office and Specialized Investigation Brigade	Enforce criminal laws, including those related to child labor, child trafficking, child commercial sexual exploitation, recruitment and use of child soldiers, and the use of children in illicit activities. (3,4,6,8,44,45)
Ministry of Security's Police Brigade for the Protection of Morals and Children (BPMC), and the Brigade to Fight Migrant and Human Trafficking	Investigate crimes against children, including human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (3,6,9,15)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Mali took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Civil Service and Social Dialogue (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$115,000 (6)	\$17,250 (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	113 (6)	116 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A (6)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	571 (6)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (6)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	85 (6)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	45 (6)	Unknown (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (29)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (9)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Mali's workforce, which includes approximately 6.5 million workers. Research indicates that Mali does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (43,46) There are 15 inspectors and comptrollers dedicated to child labor issues. (6) Although all regions have labor inspectors, government services are limited or non-existent in some areas due to the insecurity caused by the presence of non-state armed groups. (3,15,43) In addition, reports indicate that a lack of trained staff, equipment, vehicles, and funding hampered the labor inspectorate's ability to conduct child labor inspections and legal proceedings, especially in remote areas of northern Mali. (3,8,25,43,47) Moreover, the transition government rarely collects statistics on the matter, and there is no central database to maintain any data related to the worst forms of child labor. (10) Finally, the reported number of child labor victims is likely lower than the actual number of victims, given the widespread nature of child labor and inadequate enforcement of child labor laws in Mali. (3,4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mali took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (6)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (6)	Unknown (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (6)	Unknown (9)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	Unknown (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (9)

Reports indicate that because of political instability, which hinders labor and criminal law enforcement efforts in western and northern Mali, the prevalence of hereditary slavery, forced labor, and human trafficking worsened in 2022. (3,8,9,24,25,43,48) Mali also lacked trained staff and funding to adequately conduct criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, particularly in remote areas. (3,24,43) For example, the number of law enforcement agents working for the Brigade for the Protection of Morals and Children (BPMC)–54—is inadequate given the prevalence of the worst forms of child labor in the country. (3,6) Research also showed that the BPMC's budget was insufficient, and it had only three vehicles to conduct inspections and

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very limited amounts of fuel for each quarter in 2022. Additionally, there were reports that staff did not receive office materials and had to use personal resources for official documents and furniture. (6,9)

The government did not provide information on whether new criminal investigators received initial training, whether refresher courses were provided, the number of investigations carried out, whether violations were found, whether prosecutions were initiated, the number of convictions, or imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this report. (9) Many justice sector actors also noted government officials' interference in cases involving slavery-related practices in an effort to have the charges dismissed. (49,50)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The transition government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of clarity about the roles of coordinating bodies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee to Track Child Labor (CDN)	Functions under MOL and acts as the main coordinating body for the elimination of child labor in Mali. Composed of several ministries, NGOs, business organizations, and trade unions. (9) During the reporting period, CDN held regular meetings. (9)

Reports indicate that there is confusion with regard to roles and a lack of coordination between the National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE) and the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices. (8,24,48,51)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The transition government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of a national child labor action plan covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2018–2022)	Aimed to enhance the legal framework to prevent human trafficking, improve enforcement efforts, and provide effective protection and care for survivors. Led by the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices. (52) Called for the establishment of a formal body to coordinate government efforts to address human trafficking, and allocated a budget of \$10 million for the 5-year period, or \$2 million per year. The transition government pledged to contribute \$350,000 annually. (22,51) In 2022, several anti-trafficking trainings, workshops, and community outreach events were carried out. (8)
Interministerial Circular and the Protocol on the Release and Transfer of Children Associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces	Provides a framework that highlights the responsibility of the government to prevent children's involvement in armed conflict, and to protect and reintegrate those children who become involved. (15,53,54) During the reporting period, at least 14 child soldiers were removed from armed groups. (9)

‡ The transition government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (3,15,55)

In 2020, the National Plan to Eliminate Child Labor (PANETEM) ended, and a new PANETEM is being developed, but has not yet been finalized. (6) Although Mali has adopted the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor.

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the transition government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Mali Government and NGO-Implemented Programs†	The Directorate for the Promotion of Children and Family (DPCF), led by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family (MPFEF), coordinates issues related to child labor and child protection. (4,6,8) Additionally, the “Child Travel Card” program (<i>Titre de Voyage pour Enfant</i>), created by DPCF in 2002, remained a part of the directorate's efforts to address child trafficking by facilitating proper identification of children traveling within and outside Mali. Failure to show a child travel card will prompt follow-up actions to confirm whether the child is a victim of human trafficking for forced labor, commercial sexual exploitation, or forced migration. (6,9) Research indicates that this program does not cover foreign citizens. (10) Also led by MPFEF, the Interministerial Committee to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children conducts awareness-raising campaigns to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, implements reintegration programs for former child soldiers, and conducts joint missions with international partners to determine the presence of children in armed conflict. (8,15) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the programs during the reporting period.
ILO-Implemented Projects to Combat Child Labor	ILO-implemented projects to address child labor and forced labor in supply chains. These projects included the CLEAR Cotton Project on Child and Forced Labor (2019–2022), an \$8.5 million EU and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)-funded global project to address child labor and forced labor in cotton and textile supply chains, and ACCEL Africa (2018–2022), a \$26.5 million Government of Netherlands-funded regional project to address child labor in gold mining and cotton supply chains. (6,43,56-58) The South-South Project on Decent Work (<i>Programme Sud-Sud sur le Travail Décent</i>) was funded by the government of Brazil (\$400,000) and implemented by the ILO, and was extended until December 2022. The program aimed to provide labor inspection training and capacity building to labor inspectors, and to improve working conditions in cotton production areas by promoting decent work principles and providing social protections to producers. (4,9) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the CLEAR Cotton Project on Child and Forced Labor or the South-South Project on Decent Work during the reporting period.
Foreign Government and Company-Implemented Programs	Fighting Child Labor in the Value Chain of the Cotton, Clothing, and Textile Industries (<i>Lutte contre le Travail des Enfants dans la Chaîne de Valeur Coton, Textile, et Habillement</i>) was funded by the EU and FAO and implemented by the ILO between 2018 and 2022. The project reinforced the national legal framework for addressing child labor and forced labor in the cotton sector. (4,9) The project included mapping the supply chain of cotton and clothing, taking into account gender considerations. (4,9) Promoting the Principles and Fundamental Rights in the Cotton Supply Chain Work Environment (2018–2022) was a project funded by Inditex, a Spanish multi-national company working in the cotton sector. This project targeted cotton producers in the cotton-producing region of Sikasso and aimed to promote a favorable work environment for the protection of fundamental worker rights. (4,6) Included awareness campaigns and trainings for relevant partners, local associations, and community leaders toward developing a monitoring system that ensured respect for fundamental worker rights in the cotton sector. The program also promoted women's rights and women's leadership in cotton producer organizations and cooperatives. (4) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Fighting Child Labor in the Value Chain of the Cotton, Clothing, and Textile Industries program or the Promoting the Principles and Fundamental Rights in the Cotton Supply Chain Work Environment program during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the transition Government of Mali.

‡ The transition government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3,15,59,60)

An informal referral mechanism exists among NGOs, UN bodies, police, and other government agencies to allow the withdrawal of children from armed conflict and to provide social services to survivors of the worst forms of child labor. (3,43,51) Despite these efforts, reports indicate that resources and facilities available to social services agencies are inadequate. (3,4,25,43) In addition, while Mali does not fund or participate in programs to address child labor in domestic work, forced begging, or commercial sexual exploitation, it provides in-kind and financial support to NGOs working on these issues. (8)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mali (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws providing free basic education include all children in Mali, including non-citizens.	2022
	Ensure that the Labor Code establishes a minimum age no younger than age 13 for light work and specifies the conditions under which light work may be undertaken, in accordance with international standards.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits hereditary slavery.	2017 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the use, procurement, or offering of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs, in accordance with international standards.	2009 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups for use in any armed conflict.	2013 – 2022
	Revise the Interministerial Circular on the Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers to include the specific ages of children covered by the Circular, while ensuring that these ages are in compliance with international standards. Ensure that children under age 18 are not penalized for acts committed as a result of being forcibly recruited into armed groups or used in armed conflict.	2009 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase labor inspectorate funding and resources, including training, equipment, and transportation to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of northern Mali.	2012 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 116 to 162 to ensure adequate coverage of approximately 6.5 million workers.	2012 – 2022
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations found and the number of inspections conducted at the worksite.	2010 – 2022
	Collect child labor statistics regularly and create a centralized database to track data on the worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement, including whether new criminal investigators received initial training and whether refresher courses were provided, the number of investigations, violations found, and prosecutions initiated, and whether penalties for violations of the worst forms of child labor were imposed.	2020 – 2022
	Implement the provisions of the Interministerial Circular and the UN-signed Protocol, which require that children in detention for their association with armed groups be transferred to social services or to UN child protection agencies for appropriate reintegration and social protection services.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement efforts related to child labor are properly funded and resourced.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that government officials are held accountable for interference in legal cases related to crimes concerning the worst forms of child labor, including in cases of slavery and the recruitment and use of child soldiers.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor are prosecuted and convicted in accordance with the law.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that children are not imprisoned for their association with armed groups.	2022
	Ensure that children under age 18 are not recruited into or used in the national armed forces, in compliance with national law.	2022
	Demobilize any child currently serving in the national armed forces and provide all appropriate social services.	2022
	Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.
Clarify roles for the National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE) and the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices coordinating mechanisms addressing child labor, and improve coordination among relevant agencies.		2010 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a national policy that addresses all forms of child labor that are prevalent in Mali, such as a national plan to eliminate child labor.	2012 – 2022
Social Programs	Revive and undertake activities to implement social programs to address child labor and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022
	Expand the Child Travel Card program, which provides identification to Malian children when they are traveling within and outside of the country, to also provide identification to foreign citizen children.	2021 – 2022
	Eliminate barriers to and make education accessible for all children, including girls and those living in conflict-affected areas, by removing school-related fees, expanding school infrastructure, increasing teacher availability, providing free school supplies, and taking measures to ensure the safety of children and teachers in schools.	2010 – 2022
	Increase birth registration rates to ensure that children have access to social services, including education.	2010 – 2022
	Institute new programs to address child labor in all relevant sectors, including domestic work, forced begging, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that government social services have sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care for survivors of the worst forms of child labor, including for children subjected to forced begging and children used in armed conflict.	2016 – 2022

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In 2022, Mauritania made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In February 2023, the government created the Instance Nationale, an organization mandated to combat hereditary slavery and human trafficking by coordinating cross-government efforts, cooperating with international partners, providing assistance to victims, maintaining a database of trafficking cases, and working with civil society organizations. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Mauritania is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement a law that delays advancement to eliminate child labor.

Mauritania’s Civil Status Code requires a copy of the biological parents’ marriage license for children to obtain a birth certificate. As a result, children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and Sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including those of slave descent, have been prevented from being registered at birth. Because birth certificates are required for enrollment in secondary school in Mauritania, children as young as age 12 cannot access education, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in herding cattle and goats. Research is needed on the prevalence of child labor in the country, and social programs are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem. In addition, the government did not publish comprehensive information about its labor law enforcement efforts.



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I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Mauritania. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	19.7 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	15.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		72.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2015 (MICS), 2015. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Herding† and caring for cattle, camels, goats, and sheep (3-8)
	Harvesting fish and shrimp,† including accompanying fishermen on boats† and selling fish (3-5,8-12)
Industry	Crushing gravel† (13)
	Construction† (4,5)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work† (3,4,8,14,15)
	Working as car mechanics,† painters, and carpenters† (4,8,13)
	Garbage scavenging (16)
	Street work, including vending, shoe shining,† begging,† and in the transportation sector (4,5,8,16)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging,† sometimes as a result of criminal gang recruitment and coercion by Koranic teachers (4,5,8,17,18)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (14,19,20)
	Use in illicit activities, including the production and transportation of drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (16,19,21)
	Indentured and hereditary slavery (3-6,18,19,22)
	Forced labor in domestic work† (4,5,16,21)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




Children in Mauritania, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, continue to be exploited as slaves and endure slave-like practices, particularly in rural and remote areas of the country. (20,23) Some children are born into slavery; others are born free but remain in a dependent status and are forced to work with their parents for their former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. (9,14,19) Enslaved children herd animals, such as cattle and goats, and perform domestic labor. (4,5,12,19) Young girls from poor families of Haratine, Wolof, Halpulaar, and Soninké communities are sometimes forced to work as domestic servants in Mauritania's urban areas. (4) In Mauritania, it is a traditional practice to send children to Koranic teachers (*marabouts*) to receive an education. However, some Koranic teachers force their students (*talibés*) to beg on the streets for long hours and to surrender the money they have earned. (4,5,8,10,19,21,24)

In July 2022, Mauritania's National Assembly adopted the Education Reform Law, which aims to transition all students to public schools and end private education. The reforms unintentionally created a new barrier to education access by creating an overwhelming demand for public education, and a structural scarcity of adequate public-school buildings, qualified teachers, and textbooks, especially given that many school buildings continued to be used as emergency shelters after catastrophic flooding events. (8) The lack of school infrastructure and limited availability of teachers in rural areas also impedes access to education, which may increase children's vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (4,15,25) In addition, children from families of slave descent, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, face barriers to accessing education due to ethnic discrimination. (6,13,26) Furthermore, refugee children may have difficulty accessing education or finding available classrooms, which makes them particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (7,13,19,25,27)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mauritania has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

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The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mauritania’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the compulsory education age being lower than the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 76 of the General Child Protection Code (28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 76 of the General Child Protection Code; Article 247 of the Labor Code (28,29)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 76 and 77 of the General Child Protection Code; Article 4 of the List of Hazardous Work Forbidden to Children (28,30)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1, 3, and 4 of the 2003 Anti-Trafficking Law; Article 1 and 2 of the 2013 Law Against Slavery and Torture Crimes; the 2015 Bill modifying the Anti-Slavery Law; Article 54 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (31-34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1 and 3 of the 2003 Anti-Trafficking Law; Article 54 of the Penal Protection Code for Children; Articles 2 and 4 of the 2020 Law Regarding the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Victim Protection; Articles 18, 43, and 67 of the 2020 Law Regarding the Fight Against Migrant Trafficking (31,34-36)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 72 and 76 of the General Child Protection Code; Article 1 of the 2003 Anti-Trafficking Law; Articles 24–26 of the Penal Protection Code for Children; Article 2 of the 2020 Law Regarding the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Victim Protection (28,31,34,35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3–5 and 14 of Law 93-37 on the Prohibition of Production, Trafficking, and Use of Drugs and Illicit Substances (37)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of the 1962 Military Recruitment Law (38)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 43 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (34)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14	Article 1 of the Basic Education Law (39)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 1 of the Basic Education Law (39)

* Country has no conscription (13)

The 2011-003 Civil Status Code requires a copy of the biological parents’ marriage license for children to obtain a birth certificate. (40) As a result, children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and Sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including those of slave descent, have been prevented from being registered at birth. While students no longer need to possess birth certificates to take part in national examinations to obtain the Certificate of Primary Education Studies, birth certificates are still required to take exams necessary to enroll in secondary school. (4,7,8,12) As a result, many children as young as age 12 cannot access secondary education, making them more vulnerable to child labor. (5,6,14,16,18,41,42) Moreover, although all families are required to register children for birth certificates, research found that the civil registration process, which includes obtaining birth certificates, is confusing and time consuming. Applicants have faced additional hardship due to the closure of registration centers outside the capital, and a lack of training for registration center staff. (28,40) To address some of these challenges, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family (MASEF) and the National Child Protection Council work nationwide to identify cases of citizens—including children—who are unable to access birth certificates and provide them with the support needed to complete the registration process. (43) Mauritania also has a special committee to review cases of unregistered applicants and facilitate documentation processes for marginalized and vulnerable communities, including by conducting site visits to civil registration

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centers where they provide support to individuals with the civil registration process. (43,44) The government also continued to collaborate with UNHCR to issue birth certificates to Malian refugee children during the reporting period. (8)

The Labor Code allows children ages 12 and older to perform light work as long as it does not impede their school attendance, does not exceed 2 hours per day, and is authorized by the Ministry of Labor. (29) However, the Labor Code does not specify the activities in which light work may be permitted. (45) In addition, children in Mauritania are required to attend school only up to age 14. This leaves children ages 14 through 16 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school but are not legally allowed to work. (28,39)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Professional Education's Directorate of Labor and Inspection (MFTPMA)	Enforces labor laws and investigates labor code infractions, including violations related to minimum wage and hazardous work. (8,26)
Ministry of the Interior's Special Brigade for Minors	Investigates crimes against children, including human trafficking, and monitors religious schools (<i>mahadras</i>) to ensure that children are not forced to beg on behalf of their teachers. Mainly operates in the capital, Nouakchott. (8,13,26,46)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Responsible for enforcing Mauritania's anti-slavery and anti-trafficking laws. The MOJ's Directorate of the Judiciary for the Protection of Children assists with the enforcement of child protection issues and oversees tribunals responsible for sentencing offenders. (8,13) Manages the anti-slavery courts, which prosecute crimes related to slavery, and provides free legal assistance to survivors, including children. Anti-slavery courts are located in Néma, Nouakchott, and Nouadhibou. (8,19,20,47)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Mauritania took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Professional Education's Directorate of Labor and Inspection (MFTPMA) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$33,300 (4)	\$33,300 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	233 (4)	128 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (48)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	570 (4)	795 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (4)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (4)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (8)

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In 2022, the MFTPMA provided training to labor inspectors on the country's hazardous work list. (8) New inspectors also receive training on the Labor Code, child labor laws, and on all labor-related conventions the country has ratified. (49) Labor inspectors prepare reports when they find a labor violation and may include a recommendation for a penalty, but they are not allowed to assess penalties. However, inspectors must file labor violation reports with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the MOJ assesses the penalty for the violation. (4,12) Research found that the MFTPMA lacked equipment, training, transportation, and funding necessary to conduct inspections, especially in remote locations and in the informal sector, which employs more than 60 percent of the workforce. (4,8,50,51)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritania took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient investigation and prosecution of criminal cases related to hereditary slavery.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (4)	No (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (4)	4 (20)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	6 (8)
Number of Convictions	2 (7)	0 (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (8)

In 2022, the government carried out numerous informational campaigns around the country to address indentured and hereditary slavery. (20,52) In October, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, in collaboration with several human rights organizations, carried out a nationwide awareness raising campaign on anti-slavery and anti-trafficking in persons laws, which reached an estimated 63,000 people. (20) Also in October, MOJ carried out its own campaign to raise awareness about existing anti-slavery and anti-trafficking in persons laws, with the objective of providing training to judges and prosecutors in rural areas. (20) In addition, the National Commission for Human Rights also led an awareness campaign into several regions of the country, which was joined by several foreign ambassadors at different times, as well as by the representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nouakchott. This campaign trained local stakeholders and government agencies how to properly identify and report slavery and trafficking in persons cases, as well as how to use the newly established toll-free number to forward and follow up on those types of cases. (20) This toll-free number will provide witnesses, survivors, and other individuals an opportunity to report potential cases of trafficking and slavery anonymously, safely, and securely. (20)

Despite these efforts, more actions are needed from criminal law enforcement agencies to address the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery, given the magnitude of the problem. (11,16,18,23,53,54) In some cases, insufficient action may be due to corruption, misunderstanding of anti-slavery laws, or a lack of political will to prosecute suspected slaveholders in rural areas. (4,10,53) For instance, some police and prosecutors have failed to investigate cases of slavery, even when a complaint has been filed. (55) There are also reports of investigative judges unlawfully dismissing cases of slavery, pressuring victims to drop their cases, and other judges reclassifying slavery cases as a lesser crime. Often it is accepted to use social mediation in lieu of prosecution, including the acceptance of direct payment made by the perpetrator as compensation instead of using the criminal justice system. (5,10,11,21,25,50,51,55,56) Research also indicates that enforcement agencies, including the anti-slavery courts, lack personnel and funding to adequately enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (6,10,19,22,50,57) In addition, improperly documented evidence gathered during investigations, a lack of specialized prosecutors and judges, and a lack of training for police and judicial officials often resulted in victims of slavery or trafficking not being identified. (11,25,50,51,56) Furthermore, perpetrators found guilty in

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slavery cases often avoid justice by escaping into neighboring countries. (25) Although the government regularly publishes circulars to describe the process of investigating slavery cases and provide victims with services, research indicates that not all officials may be following the circular's guidance. This includes the joint circular 104-2021, which requested that judicial actors address cases under the Anti-Slavery and Anti-Trafficking laws with an appropriate level of seriousness, and also called for greater assistance to victims. (25,52,58)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Commissariat on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Civil Society Relations	Coordinates the development and implementation of government policies related to human rights, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Carries out awareness-raising campaigns to combat slavery and human trafficking, and acts as a semi-autonomous body under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister, which is also a member of the Human Rights Inter-Ministerial Committee. (19,59) The Commissariat on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Civil Society Relations has the power to act as a civil party on behalf of victims of slavery. (10) In 2022, the Commissariat's budget was increased to \$6.5 million from \$4 million the previous year. (52)

In May 2022, at the government's invitation, the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery Including its Causes and Consequences visited Mauritania, meeting with the President, Prime Minister, other ministers, as well as civil society and international partners. (60) In addition, in February 2023, the government created the National Authority to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (INLCTPTM), or *Instance Nationale*, an organization mandated to combat hereditary slavery and human trafficking by coordinating cross-government efforts, cooperating with international partners, providing assistance to survivors, maintaining a database of trafficking cases, and working with civil society organizations. (20,25) The INLCTPTM also manages a fund to provide lodging, meals, and financial support to survivors of slavery and their families both during and after prosecution of their cases in the anti-slavery courts. (13,25)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including insufficient funding to implement national action plans and strategies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Protection Strategy (2020–2025)	Aims to protect children against violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Specifically includes children exploited at work, child survivors of human trafficking, children living on the streets, and children who are survivors of violence or sexual exploitation. (5,8,61) As in the previous year, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Child Protection Strategy during the reporting period.
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2020–2022)	Adopted in March 2020, aimed to address forced child labor, forced child begging, forced prostitution, slavery, and other forms of child exploitation. Overseen by the Commissariat on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Civil Society Relations with a budget of \$145,946 (5.4 million MRU) for implementation. (17,62) During the reporting period, 20 awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking aimed at NGOs were carried out. Additionally, 14 trainings on anti-trafficking in persons legislation were organized for administrative, judicial and security officials. (13)
Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development (2016–2030)	Aims to reduce poverty, promote sustainable development, and increase access to fundamental social services. Overseen by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development. (63) Integrates strategies to increase birth registration and access to compulsory education, strengthen social protection systems for children, and support efforts to combat slavery, including its vestiges. (63) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development during the reporting period.

Efforts to implement key policies related to child labor continue to be delayed due to insufficient allocation of resources. (7,11,56,64)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Program to Eradicate the Effects of Slavery†	Government program functioning under the Taazour Administration that supports the reintegration and rehabilitation of former slaves. (65) As in past years, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Program to Eradicate the Effects of Slavery during the reporting period.
Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family (MASEF) Office of Childhood Programs†	Government programs to protect vulnerable children, including victims of the worst forms of child labor. (14,20) During the reporting period, the MASEF and the NGO Save the Children trained 200 child protection actors on ways to identify child abuse (including violence and exploitation), and put in place a strategy to enable vulnerable children to access preschool education. (8) A total of 150 establishments throughout the country have been set up, including 100 facilities opened in Nouakchott in 2022. (8) Also in 2022, MASEF created additional child protection committees to cover all districts, and continued to operate their Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children. (8) In collaboration with the ILO, the MASEF has also begun engaging with domestic workers, employers, and farmers, respectively, to increase social dialogue and improve livelihoods and labor conditions, thereby reducing vulnerabilities to forced labor and risk of continued enslavement. (25)
Model <i>Mahadras</i> Program†	Ministry of Islamic Affairs-funded program that provides monthly cash transfers of approximately \$27 to parents whose children are enrolled in Model <i>Mahadras</i> . Also operates adult literacy classes for 8,000 religious leaders (<i>imams</i>) across Mauritania to raise awareness of children's rights, including information on child labor and child trafficking. (21) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Model <i>Mahadras</i> Program during the reporting period.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>
 † Program is funded by the Government of Mauritania.

In March 2022, the government co-chaired a sub-regional symposium on slavery, which marked the first of its kind to take place in Mauritania and included civil society actors from multiple countries. (8) The government also made some efforts to combat forced child begging, which included visiting some Koranic schools and working with religious leaders to raise awareness of child protection issues. (8) Moreover, the Government of Mauritania, in collaboration with the IOM and the U.S. government, launched an anti-trafficking project to develop the capacity of law enforcement officials, local authorities, and NGOs to address trafficking in persons. As a result of this project, a guide known as the "Code of Good Practice" was created and shared with social services providers. Despite these efforts, the scope of social programs in Mauritania is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially in agriculture, herding livestock, domestic work, and for children in hereditary and indentured slavery. (4,10) In addition, the lack of recent data on slavery limits the government's ability to develop effective social programs to comprehensively address this issue, and more awareness-raising efforts on anti-slavery laws are needed throughout the country. (51)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mauritania (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that labor laws specify the activities in which light work may be permitted.	2015 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age from 14 to 16 to align with the minimum age for work.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish complete information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor law violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, and whether routine inspections were targeted.	2019 – 2022
	Increase training and resources for labor and criminal law enforcement agencies, including the anti-slavery courts, to adequately enforce labor laws, especially in remote areas and in the informal sector.	2010 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase efforts to ensure that cases of the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery and forced begging, are fully investigated, brought to court, and prosecuted in accordance with the law.	2016 – 2022
	Improve evidence gathering and documentation processes during slavery case investigations and provide the necessary specialized training for prosecutors and judges in the anti-slavery courts.	2022
	Ensure presumptive pretrial detention for defendants in hereditary slavery cases so that perpetrators found guilty in slavery cases are not able to escape into neighboring countries.	2022
	Ensure all officials involved in slavery or trafficking in persons cases follow the existing circular 104-2021, and that the circular is as widely shared as possible in order to reach all officials.	2022
	Ensure that judicial officials can properly identify cases of slavery and trafficking and that they do not improperly dismiss or fail to refer appropriate cases to the anti-slavery courts.	2020 – 2022
	Take appropriate corrective action to hold accountable any government officials who do not properly enforce, or who prevent the enforcement of the laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery.	2022
	Ensure that all cases of slavery and slavery-like practices are tried in the anti-slavery court system and in instances in which they are being tried outside the system, ensure that cases are appropriately transferred.	2022
	Ensure slavery victims are aware of their rights afforded to them by the judicial system.	2022
	Increase collaboration and coordination between labor and criminal law enforcement agencies.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that key policies related to child labor receive sufficient resources, including funds, for effective implementation.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and publish results from activities on an annual basis.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure ongoing reforms guarantee enough schools and teachers, in order to provide every child with access to education.	2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor and make information about implementation measures publicly available on an annual basis.	2021 – 2022
	Expand the scope of programs to address child labor, including in agriculture, herding, domestic work, and hereditary and indentured slavery.	2009 – 2022
	Implement a continuous awareness-raising program for government officials on the laws related to slavery and child labor.	2012 – 2022
	Conduct research and collect data on slavery to inform the development of effective policies and programs to identify and protect children who are at risk.	2010 – 2022
	Increase funding for social programs that provide services to formerly enslaved persons.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that all children are able to obtain birth certificates to increase their access to secondary education and reduce their vulnerability to child labor.	2016 – 2022
	Increase funding dedicated to improving school infrastructure and teacher availability, especially in rural areas, to eliminate barriers to and make education accessible for all children, including those from families of slave descent, refugees, and ethnic minorities.	2011 – 2022

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In 2022, Mauritius made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In January 2022, the government enacted three laws, the Children's Act 2020, the Children's Court Act 2020, and the Child Sex Offenders Register Act 2020, aimed at reinforcing the legal framework on the protection of children. The three laws intended to harmonize Mauritius' domestic laws with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The government also increased its number of labor inspectors from 109 in 2021 to 164 in 2022 and adopted a 2022–2026 national action plan to combat human trafficking, with support from the International Organization of Migration. However, some children in Mauritius are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities, including selling drugs. Children also engage in child labor in construction and street vending. The government should consider implementing policies and social programs to improve the standard of care and availability of housing for victims of child commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, the police are in need of sufficient human resources, training in child-sensitive interview techniques, and adequate procedural mechanisms for investigation of child labor crimes, such as those involving commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, gaps remain in the implementation of key policies and social programs related to child labor, including the worst forms of child labor.

Agalega Islands, Cargados Carajos Shoals, and Rodrigues are not shown.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritius. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		96.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2021. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including animal rearing (3,4)
	Fishing, including diving, and casting nets and traps (3-5)
Industry	Construction (3,4)
Services	Domestic work (3)
	Working in shops and restaurants (4-7)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and in the transportation sector (3,4,8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,4)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (3,4)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Reporting from 2022 showed that children from low-income families in Mauritius engaged in child labor activities on construction sites and in street vending, domestic work, animal rearing, agriculture, and the transportation and selling of goods. (3,4) Children were exposed to risks of health hazards and accidents while working without personal protective equipment, including drowning due to deep fishing, contracting sexually transmissible diseases and unwanted pregnancies, alcohol and drug addiction, and stymied physical and psychological development. (4) In addition, some children in Mauritius are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation by their peers or family members, or through fraudulent offers of other employment. (4,7,9) There are also reports that some children in Mauritius are sexually abused and exploited through online channels. (3,4,10,11) Because Mauritius has never conducted a national child labor survey, information on the prevalence of child labor in the country is limited. (3,12,13)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mauritius has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

On July 1, 2021, the government ratified ILO C.190, which obligates each Member State to respect, promote, and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work, including the effective abolition of child labor. (14,15) The Convention entered into force for Mauritius on July 1, 2022. (16)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mauritius's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibitions for the military recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 2 and 8 of the Workers' Rights Act (17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 9 of the Workers' Rights Act (17)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 8 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (18)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2, 11, 14, and 21 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 6 of the Constitution (19,20)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 13A of the Child Protection Act; Articles 2, 11, 14, and 21 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (20,21)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 14 of the Child Protection Act; Article 253 of the Criminal Code; Article 11 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act; Articles 19–21 of the Children's Act (20-23)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 30.1b–e, 38a, 41.1f, and 41.2 of the Dangerous Drugs Act (24)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 63 of the Criminal Code (22)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 37.2 of the Education Act (25)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 35 of the Education Act (25)

* Country has no conscription (26)

† Country has no standing military (26)

In January 2022, the government enacted three laws aimed at reinforcing the legal framework on the protection of children. (3,4,27) The three laws intended to bring Mauritius' domestic laws in line with the rights and obligations outlined in the UN CRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. (23) The Children's Act, which replaced the Child Protection Act, aims to address the limitations of the Child Protection Act by aligning with international standards on children's rights. The Children's Act also criminalizes child abuse, including abandonment, corporal punishment, child pornography, child grooming, and bullying. (23) Further, the Children's Act protects children under the age of 16 who have been victims of child trafficking, forced labor, slavery, or child labor. (23) The second law is the Children's Court Act, which establishes a court exclusively for criminal and protection cases related to children, as outlined in the Children's Act 2020. (28) The Children's Court Act establishes a Protection Division with jurisdiction over issues affecting the welfare of children and a Criminal Division with jurisdiction over criminal offenses against children and crimes committed by children. (28) The third law, the Child Sex Offender Register Act, seeks to reduce the risk of sexual offenses against children by establishing a Child Sex Offender Register that will assist in monitoring, tracking, and investigating sexual offenses against children. (29)

The Workers' Rights Act specifies that a child under age 16 may not be employed to work in any occupation but allows for children to do light jobs in family businesses that are not harmful to their health, development, or education. However, the law does not limit the number of hours for light work. (12,17)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Human Resource Development and Training	Enforces all labor laws, including those related to child labor. (3,30,31)
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Investigates any suspected or reported cases of child labor or violation of a child's rights, proposes laws and policies to advance children's rights, and implements trainings on child protection laws and prevention. (10,32,33)
Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Family Protection Brigade) and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Coordinate to investigate and prosecute crimes related to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, use of children in illicit activities, and commercial sexual exploitation. (3,6) Maintain a database of all human trafficking incidents involving children and refers all cases of commercial sexual exploitation to the Child Development Unit (CDU). (34)

The Ministry of Gender reported 10 alleged cases of child labor, 35 alleged cases of child mendicity, and 3 alleged cases of child trafficking during the reporting period. However, non-government reports indicate that the actual number of child labor cases, including the worst forms of child labor, are significantly higher and rising. (4,35) In addition to existing agencies that protect children, the Mauritius Probation and Aftercare Service was established

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under the 2020 Children's Act and appointed to monitor and assess the sound physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional, and social development of children in probation, detention, and post-detention circumstances. (4)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to address child labor (Table 6). Notably, the government increased its funding for the Labor Inspectorate, which coincided with increases in the number of inspectors recruited and the frequency of inspections carried out. However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Human Resource Development and Training (MOLHRDT) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient coverage in inspection planning.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,456,841 (3)	\$2,347,852 (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	130 (3,36)	164 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (17)	Yes (17)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	6,890 (36)	7,024 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	2 (3)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	1 (3)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	1 (3)	0 (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (17)	Yes (17)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (4)

In 2022, the MOLHRDT held 27 training sessions for new recruits and 99 training sessions for other officers. The ministry's Labor and Industrial Relations Division also received training on child labor regulations enumerated in the Workers' Rights Act. (3,4) This division is responsible for enforcing child labor law compliance and manages complaints—including those related to child labor—at 17 regional labor offices. However, the hotline service operated by the MOLHRDT did not receive any calls related to child labor during the reporting period. (4) Section 34 of the Children's Act imposes a mandatory reporting obligation on persons performing professional or official duties with respect to children, including health care professionals, employees of childcare institutions, and social workers. Failure of these professionals to report cases in which a child has been or is likely to be exposed to harm makes them liable to a fine of up to \$4,500 and to imprisonment of up to 5 years. (23,36)

The MOLHRDT reported that no children were removed from child labor due to labor inspections during the reporting period. (4) Although the government conducted labor inspections during the reporting period, it is unknown whether the government adequately verified if children were found to be involved in child labor or hazardous work. (4) While the Workers' Rights Act permits unannounced inspections, the MOLHRDT has previously reported that labor inspections are not carried out on private properties with small farms unless the farm is registered as a business; otherwise, labor inspectors are required to receive permission from the owner to conduct an inspection. (3,6,37,38)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	3 (3)	3 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (3)	0 (4)
Number of Convictions	2 (3)	0 (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (3)	N/A (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (4)

In 2022, new employees of the Mauritius Police received initial training, which covered the worst forms of child labor and the three new laws (the Children's Act, the Child Sex Offender Register Act, and the Children's Court Act). (3,4) The Ministry of Gender reported on three alleged cases of child trafficking during the reporting period as well as one case of drug trafficking involving a 14-year-old, which is still under investigation as of January 2023. (4)

Research indicates that the Mauritius Police lacked both sufficient human resources and an adequate procedural mechanism for investigations of commercial child exploitation, especially those related to online sexual exploitation. (4,39) Additionally, criminal law enforcement agencies continue to lack training, equipment, and technology to properly enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including capacity building on child-sensitive interview techniques. (3,4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a coordinating body primarily focused on child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
CDU	Enforces legislation related to children; implements policies and social programs related to child development; and provides social services to survivors of the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking. Also provides trainings and awareness campaigns on human trafficking, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and operates the 113 hotline for any offenses involving children. (3,40-42) Managed by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (MOGE), the budget for child protection, welfare, and development was \$4.5 million for fiscal year 2022–2023, which mainly funded CDU. (4,6)

The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Trafficking comprises representatives from the Attorney General's Office, the MOLHRDT, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, and other ministries. Chaired by the Attorney General's Office with the purpose of coordinating anti-trafficking efforts in Mauritius, this committee was reactivated by the cabinet in 2021 and met once in 2022. (3,4,43,46) The Children's Act that took effect in January 2022 provides for the creation of a Child Services Coordinating Panel, which is responsible for the coordination of all activities relating to the implementation of this new law, the UN CRC, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The panel met six times during 2022. (3,4,23,46)

The government's efforts to address the worst forms of child labor were hindered by a lack of coordination, interagency communication, and information sharing between key coordinating mechanisms. In addition, there is no coordinating body whose primary focus is child labor. (3,4,6)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Nine Year Continuous Basic Education Policy (2017–2030)	Aims to enable all students to successfully complete 9 years of basic schooling and forms part of a package of reforms designed to strategically transform the education system in Mauritius. Also referred to as Nine Year Schooling. (47,48)
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2022–2026)†	On December 09, 2022, the Government of Mauritius approved a new national action plan to combat human trafficking for implementation. (46)
National Sport and Physical Activity Policy (2018–2028)	Provides a structured sports program available to all ages. Focuses on children and young adults, offering after-school recreational activities to help reduce children's vulnerability to child labor and illicit activities. (38,49)

†The policy adopted was created during the reporting period.

Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor in Mauritius during the reporting period. (3,4) Although the Government of Mauritius has adopted the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education Policy and the National Sport and Physical Activity Policy, research found no evidence of other policies to address the worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation. In December 2022, the government formally adopted a national action plan to combat human trafficking, which was initially drafted in 2016 and revised in 2022. (4,36,39,43,46,50)

Despite positive developments in recent years, discrimination against children with disabilities continues in Mauritius, with many being excluded and denied the right to an education. (4) Children with physical disabilities have the right to attend public schools, but are often turned away because they could not be accommodated. Additionally, children with mental disabilities attended separate schools that received inadequate government funding. (51)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
National Children's Council†	Overseen by MOGE, offers a wide range of services and facilities, including day care, shelters, creativity centers, children's clubs, and school child protection clubs around the island. (7,52) Awareness-raising campaigns reached 10,266 primary and secondary school students from January to October 2022. (4) The government has established the National Children's Council to improve the effectiveness of institutional care facilities and shelters. During the reporting period, MOGE provided training on child abuse and commercial sexual exploitation for staff working in residential care facilities and delivered psychological support and counseling for child residents (4,5) However, evidence suggests that there continues to be a lack of appropriate standards of care, inadequate provision of services, and overcrowding in some centers that house orphans, child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, and child survivors of other types of abuses. (5)
Eradication of Absolute Poverty Program†	Provides support to families living in absolute poverty through empowerment and income programs administered by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity. Activities include a monthly child allowance, provision of free school materials, examination fees support, medical screening, housing support, and counseling. (5) Research could not determine activities conducted during the reporting period. (43)
Awareness-Raising Programs on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking†	Educate the public on preventing commercial sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking, created by MOGE. (3,7) Between January and October 2022, MOGE, through CDU, participated in six radio and television programs to raise awareness on children's rights and child abuse. CDU also organized a high-level training on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in November 2022 for approximately 33 people. (4)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mauritius (Table II).

Table II. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions limit the number of hours for light work.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted in all sectors in which children work, including in the informal sector.	2018 – 2022
	Increase the amount of training, human resources, and funding for agencies responsible for enforcing criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor.	2011 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that coordination mechanisms to address the worst forms of child labor share information and policy-making decisions, improve coordination, and prevent overlap.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that a coordinating body exists that comprehensively addresses child labor.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and publish results from activities implemented.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in Mauritius to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, have equal access to education.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation have access to comprehensive and quality social services and standards of care.	2010 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken to implement the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Program.	2019 – 2022

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In 2022, Mexico made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government approved the ratification of the International Labor Organization's Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention and increased the number of municipal-level bodies responsible for coordinating efforts to address child labor. In addition, the government's Benito Juárez Wellbeing National Scholarship Program reached 1.2 million more students in 2022 than in 2021. However, children in Mexico are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, including in the production of chile peppers, coffee, sugarcane, and tomatoes. Although 55.2 percent of all employment in Mexico occurs in the informal sector, federal and some state-level labor inspectors carry out inspections in that sector only after receiving formal complaints. Further, the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare does not have an internal system to track cases of child labor violations, and the 529 federal labor inspectors in the country are likely insufficient to cover the country's more than 57 million workers. Criminal law enforcement agencies also lack human and financial resources, and social programs to prevent and eliminate child labor are insufficient.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mexico.

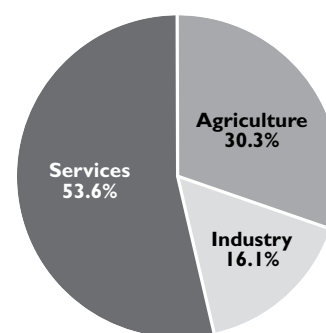
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.0 (866,293)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), Encuesta Nacional de Trabajo Infantil, 2019. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/ Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working in agriculture,† including in the production of avocados, beans, chile peppers, coffee, cotton, cucumbers, eggplants, beans (green), guavas, melons, nuts, onions, pineapples, sugarcane, tobacco,† and tomatoes (3-12)
	Cattle raising (12,13)
	Packing shrimp (12)
Industry	Manufacturing† footwear, garments, leather goods, and textiles (2,5,13-15)
	Producing baked goods (16,17)
	Construction,† activities unknown (2,12,13)
	Mining,† including amber and coal (2,12,13,18-21)
	Loading wood and working in carpentry workshops (12)
Services	Street work† as vendors, shoe shiners, beggars, car washers, and porters (3,12,16,22-24)
	Working in auto repair garages and bars† (2,5,12)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/ Industry	Activity
Services	Scavenging in landfills and recycling (17)
	Domestic work (2,12,13,25)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, street vending, and begging (12,21,24,26-31)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, including in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,9,12,21,32-36)
	Use by cartels to perform illicit activities, including the production of poppies for heroin, drug trafficking, stealing fuel, and carrying out armed attacks, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (12,21,26,36-44)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children's work in agriculture often includes long working hours, use of sharp tools, handling pesticides, and carrying heavy loads. (4,45,46) Indigenous children, migrant children, and those working in agriculture are particularly vulnerable to child labor. (26,31,32,47,48) Children from indigenous populations are more likely to work across all sectors, including in agriculture, than non-indigenous children. (31,49,50) Indigenous children are also less likely to attend school due to the lack of schools near their homes, educational materials, and instruction in native languages. (51,52)







Organized criminal groups operating in rural areas throughout the country actively recruit children. (36,44,53,54) These children serve as lookouts, carry out armed attacks against authorities and rival cartels, and are used in the production, transport, and sale of drugs. (26,42,43,55,56) Children in Mexico are also subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking within the country. In addition to organized criminal groups, perpetrators of child trafficking crimes are often family members or acquaintances of the victim. (9,26,36,57) The Secretariat of Health’s National System for Integral Family Development (SNDIF) estimates that each year at least 70,000 children are trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. (21,58) Migrant children from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Haiti, and internal migrant children from Mexico, especially those traveling by themselves, are more vulnerable to human trafficking, forced recruitment by organized criminal groups, and other worst forms of child labor. (26,59,60)

The Secretariat of Public Education reported that over 512,000 fewer students enrolled in basic and lower secondary education in 2022 compared to the prior year. (12,61,62) It has also been reported that at least half of Mexican households do not have computers or internet access, while 80 percent of indigenous or rural households lacked computers or internet access, limiting the ability of these children to participate in distance learning programs. (63,64)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mexico has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government ratified the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, 1930 on November 10, 2022. (65)

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 123 of the Constitution; Article 22 bis of the Labor Code; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents; Article 6 of the General Education Law (66-69)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 23 and 175 of the Labor Code (69)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 175 and 176 of the Labor Code (69)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1 and 5 of the Constitution; Articles 11, 12, and 22 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (65-67,70)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 10 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (67,70)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 200–205-Bis of the Federal Penal Code; Articles 13 and 18 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (67,70,71)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 196 and 201 of the Federal Penal Code; Article 24 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 2, 4, and 5 of the Law on Organized Crime (70-72)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 5 of the Military Service Law (73)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 24 of the Military Service Law (73)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 123 and 201 of the Federal Penal Code; Articles 16 and 47 of the Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (67,71)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Articles 6 and 129 of the General Education Law (68)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3 of the Constitution; Article 7, Section IV of the General Education Law (66,68)

In 2022, the Mexican Senate revised the Military Service Law to remove the exception that allowed children aged 16 and 17 to enroll in voluntary state military service. (73-76) In April 2022, Mexico also amended the Labor Code to allow children as young as age 15 to work in some forms of agricultural employment. Previously, all work in agriculture was considered hazardous; under the new provision, only work using chemicals, handling machinery, operating heavy machinery, and determined by the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS) is considered hazardous. (69,77-79) In addition, as the minimum age for work at age 15 is lower than the compulsory education age of 18, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (78,80)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Secretariat for Labor and Social Welfare (STPS)	Leads efforts to enforce child labor laws, conduct labor inspections, and refer cases for investigation. (69,81-86) The STPS inspectorate is responsible for labor law enforcement in 22 industrial sectors under federal jurisdiction, including the sugar and tobacco industries, three types of enterprises, and labor matters affecting two or more states. The state-level labor inspectorates are responsible for labor law enforcement in all other situations. (66,69,87) Federal and state labor inspectorates carry out labor inspections in formally registered businesses. (81,82,88,89) The Federal Attorney for the Defense of Labor (PROFEDET), a decentralized unit of STPS, receives and prosecutes labor rights violations, including cases involving workers under age 18. (12)
Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (FGR)	Prosecutes crimes involving human trafficking, including those considered as categorical worst forms of child labor, such as human trafficking. (72,90) The FGR's Specialized Unit for Crimes against Women and Trafficking in Persons (FEVIMTRA) and the Specialized Unit on Trafficking in Minors, People, and Organs (UEITMPO) are responsible for investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases at the federal level, while the Specialized Office for Organized Crime (FEMDO) investigates and prosecutes cases linked to commercial sexual exploitation of children. (12,26,75,86,91-93) In addition, all 32 states have specialized trafficking in persons prosecutors or units, which are responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking at the state level. (93-96) Federal and state trafficking in persons units also receive some cases of child trafficking from the National Institute of Migration and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance. (97,98)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Mexico took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of STPS that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of unannounced inspections being conducted in all sectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,536,366 (9)	\$1,658,234 (12,99)
Number of Labor Inspectors	471 (9)	529 (12)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (89)	Yes (89)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	35,098† (9)	38,337† ‡ (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	2† (9)	0† (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	2† (9)	N/A† (12)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (9)	Unknown (12)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (89)	Yes (89)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9,100)	Yes (12)

† Data are for federal inspectorate only. (9,12)

‡ Data are from January 1, 2022, to October 31, 2022. (12)

Mexico added 58 labor inspectors at the federal level in 2022, bringing the total number of federal labor inspectors to 529, with 178 state-level labor inspectors in eleven states. (12) However, research indicates that Mexico does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (101,102) This was reported by state-level officials in Baja California Sur, Nuevo Leon, and the State of Mexico. (12) In 2022, the federal inspectorate identified no child labor violations, while eleven local-level state authorities reported identifying a total of 58 violations related to child labor, compared to 215 in 2021. (12) The states did not provide information on penalties imposed or collected. (9,41,82,86,91,103) Moreover, research could not verify that all state-level labor ministries conducted child labor inspections, sanctioned establishments in violation of the Labor Code, or applied the guidelines on identifying and sanctioning child labor violations as outlined in the "Labor Inspection Protocol to Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Workers." (9,41,82,86,91,92) Further, the total number of child labor complaints received is unknown, as STPS does not have an internal system to track

cases of child labor violations, hindering the Mexican government's ability to report on the outcomes and the prevalence of child labor violations. (87,89,104,105) STPS only conducts unannounced inspections in the informal sector for child labor violations in response to complaints, and child labor inspections must be coordinated with representatives from the Secretariat of Health's National System for Integral Family Development and the local Office of the Attorney General of Mexico (FGR). (12) As the informal sector accounts for 55 percent of employment in Mexico, including agricultural employment, the lack of inspections in this sector leaves children vulnerable to labor exploitation. (5,81,83,88,106,107) Moreover, concerns remain regarding Mexico's lack of inspections in rural areas and at small and medium enterprises, particularly in the agricultural sector. (56,108,109) Furthermore, due to limited information sharing between federal and state-level inspectorates, some establishments may not be inspected for labor law violations. (81,89,104)

Federal and state labor inspectors have the authority to recommend administrative penalties, and the STPS Directorate of Judicial affairs is responsible for determining penalties in cases under federal jurisdiction. In turn, the Directorate notifies its determination to the local-level finance authorities. (12,104) Funds collected remain with the local finance authority, which do not report the collection of sanctions to STPS. When the Directorate identifies evidence of potential crimes, it notifies the FGR and state prosecutors of child labor violations so that they can investigate and prosecute criminal acts related to these cases and coordinate with service providers to support victims of child labor. (12,81,100)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mexico took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Number of Investigations	484† (110)	383 (12,111)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (9)	27 (12)
Number of Convictions	42‡ (56)	25 (12)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (56,112)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (12)

† Data are from January 1, 2021, to July 31, 2021. (110)

‡ Data reported may not be complete. (56)

The Specialized Unit for Crimes against Women and Trafficking in Persons (*FEVIMTRA*) and Mexico's National Guard participated in trainings on child trafficking and other crimes against children, including some aimed at identifying commercial sexual exploitation cases. (12) However, reports indicate that the lack of training for criminal law enforcement officers on how to perform prosecutorial and police investigative functions hampered their ability to adequately investigate and prosecute cases involving child labor. (9,26,56,110,113,114) In addition, the inadequate capacity of prosecutors and judges to try criminal cases related to human trafficking meant that many suspected traffickers were incorrectly prosecuted for minor offenses or were acquitted. (9,26,56,110,113) Moreover, state prosecutors had limited financial resources available for investigations, training, and outreach. (110,113-115) Since 2019, the Government of Mexico has implemented austerity measures that left many secretariats and agencies, including the FGR and the National Human Rights Commission, at both the federal and state levels, without the appropriate personnel, expertise, and leadership to carry out core government functions, such as enforcing laws and establishing and implementing policies and programs related to child labor. (9,12,56,88,89,113,114) Additionally, although the government provided some information on its criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor at the federal level and for the states of Aguascalientes, Chiapas, Mexico City, and Puebla, weak coordination and inconsistent data sharing among government agencies prevented comprehensive statistics from being compiled. (12,56,110)

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Inconsistent data collection and the lack of coordination among government ministries, including those at the state level, may hinder criminal prosecutions and impact government efforts to provide victim services. (12,36,56,94,110,113,116,117)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including low levels of participation by state authorities in coordinating mechanisms.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Inter-Institutional Commission for Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Workers of the Permitted Age in Mexico (CITI)	Coordinates Mexico's activities to develop policies, approve programs, and monitor and evaluate efforts to eliminate child labor. Meets on a quarterly basis, chaired by STPS, and includes representatives from the secretariats of the Interior, Economy, Foreign Affairs, Wellbeing, Agriculture, Transportation, Education, Health, Tourism, Social Security, System for Integral Family Development (SNDIF), and FGR, and NGO networks and international technical and financial partners, such as ILO, UNODC, IOM, and academia. (12,100) There are also state level (CITI Estatales) and municipal-level committees through a National Network of Local Commissions for Preventing and Eradicating Child Labor and Protecting Adolescent Workers (CITIs Network). However, some states do not have active CITI committees, and only about half of the 32 states engaged with CITI at the federal level. (12) In addition, of the active state CITIs, only the state CITIs of Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Jalisco, and the State of Mexico reported on their activities during the reporting period. (9,12) CITI also began implementing its Plan of Action on Child Labor 2021–2024. (9,100,104) Although this plan requires the CITI Secretariat to conduct monitoring activities on a quarterly basis, it lacks an accompanying budget for activities. (118,119)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Program for the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (2020–2024)	Seeks to strengthen worker rights in Mexico and increase the participation of workers in the formal sector. (12) The program prioritizes addressing child labor as part of STPS's social inclusion strategy. (120) In 2022, STPS, in collaboration with Save the Children, trained 44 civil servants from the state government of Aguascalientes on child labor issues. (12,121)
National Program for Children and Adolescents (PRONAPPINA) (2021–2024)	Aims to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents by establishing mechanisms to support their growth and development. (12,122) In February 2022, the government launched an action plan to accompany PRONAPPINA. (123) In addition, under this program, the government published the Strategy for the Prevention of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and delivered a technical training to develop indicators on the rights of children and adolescents. (12,124)
National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (PNTdP)† (2022–2024)	Guides the work of the Inter-agency Commission to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Crimes on Human Trafficking and for the Protection and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking, under the General Law on Human Trafficking. (125) Published by the Secretariat of the Interior (SEGOB) in December 2022, this program delineates the Government of Mexico's public policy on human trafficking, in alignment with the National Development Plan 2019–2024. (9,12,126) Thirteen federal government agencies, including SEGOB, STPS, and the Secretariat of Tourism, are responsible for implementing the plan. (125) PNTdP has five key objectives: (1) promoting amendments to the legal framework on human trafficking at the federal level, (2) outlining coordination efforts on human trafficking at the national level, (3) strengthening services to survivors of human trafficking, (4) promoting research to inform actions and public policies, and (5) promoting the human rights of survivors of human trafficking. (125)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (127)

Although the government has policies to address some of the worst forms of child labor, research could not confirm whether there is a policy to address the use of children in illicit activities. (100,120,128)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

The government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including a lack of programs to address child labor in all sectors and in all states.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Benito Juarez Wellbeing National Scholarship Program†	A \$39.3 million Secretariat of Public Education cash transfer program that offers scholarships for families living in poverty and students at risk of school desertion. The Wellbeing Basic Education Family Scholarship provides bimonthly payments of \$92 per household for all children under age 15 enrolled in school, while the Benito Juarez Scholarship provides bimonthly payments of \$92 to each child enrolled in high school. (129-131) Although the program reached 11 million students in 2022, it has been criticized for providing insufficient cash transfers, lacking monitoring and evaluation, and having implementation issues. (132-137)
Education Programs‡	Managed by the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous Education Support Program (PAEI) promotes access to public education for children and adolescents from indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities through scholarships, lodging, and nutritional assistance. (138) With funding close to \$87 million, the program helped 80,607 students in 2022. (138) However, during the reporting period, the government eliminated the Indigenous People's Education Diversity Program, the Educational Program for Migrant School Population, and the Full-Time Schools Program. (9,139-141) The termination of the Full-Time Schools Program impacted 3.6 million students. Starting in April 2022, due to advocacy and legal action by parents, civil society organizations, and state-level authorities, Secretariat of Public Education expanded the scope of The School is Ours (LEEN) program from its initial focus on building and improving educational infrastructure to also include an extended school schedule and meal services. (139,142-144)
Assistance for At-Risk Children and Adolescents Program (PAMAR)†	Implemented by SNDIF at the state and municipal levels to assist youth at risk for child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and in illicit activities, by providing shelters, psychosocial assistance, and training. (9,56) Research could not confirm whether the program was active in all states and municipalities where the program is needed.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Mexico.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (12,48,100,145-147)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mexico (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 18 to align with the compulsory education age.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 529 to 3,835 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 57.5 million people.	2019 – 2022
	Expand access to trainings for federal and state-level labor inspectors on child labor protocols and ensure that protocol guidelines related to identifying, sanctioning, and referring for criminal investigation of child labor violations are followed.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare at the federal and the state-level Secretariats of Labor conduct targeted routine and unannounced labor inspections in all sectors, including in the informal sector and in rural areas.	2019 – 2022
	Improve cooperation and information sharing between federal and state-level labor inspectorates and among officials in different states.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information at the federal and state levels on the number of child labor violations identified, fines for child labor violations that were collected, and cases referred to prosecutors for criminal investigation.	2019 – 2022
	Create a case tracking system equipping the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare to identify disaggregated data for cases of child labor violations.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies and government service providers receive sufficient funding to conduct investigations and prosecutions related to alleged child labor crimes and to provide services to survivors.	2019 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase coordination and data sharing among government ministries to ensure adequate criminal prosecutions of suspected perpetrators of child labor crimes.	2019 – 2022
	Increase training for enforcement officials and prosecutors on territorial jurisdictions and on how to perform prosecutorial and police investigative functions. In addition, train prosecutors and judges on prosecuting human trafficking crimes.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure the active participation and continued engagement of all states and relevant stakeholders within the framework of the Inter-Institutional Commission for Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Workers of the Permitted Age in Mexico.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt policies that address all worst forms of child labor, including the use of children in illicit activities.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Expand access to education by increasing funding to schools, extending school schedules, improving school infrastructure, providing education materials and instruction in native languages, and fostering internet access for learning purposes.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that unaccompanied migrant children are screened for indicators of human trafficking or other victimization, are placed in child protection centers instead of detention centers, and receive access to education.	2019 – 2022
	Screen for indicators of human trafficking among children used in illicit activities by organized criminal groups and ensure that they are provided with adequate social services.	2019 – 2022
	Provide additional support to indigenous, migrant, internally displaced, and refugee children, and fund social programs to increase their access to education and reduce their risk for child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the Benito Juárez Wellbeing Scholarship Program provides sufficient cash transfers to vulnerable students, while also receiving regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure its effective implementation.	2019 – 2022
	Expand social protection programs throughout the country for victims of child labor in all relevant sectors, including in commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities.	2019 – 2022

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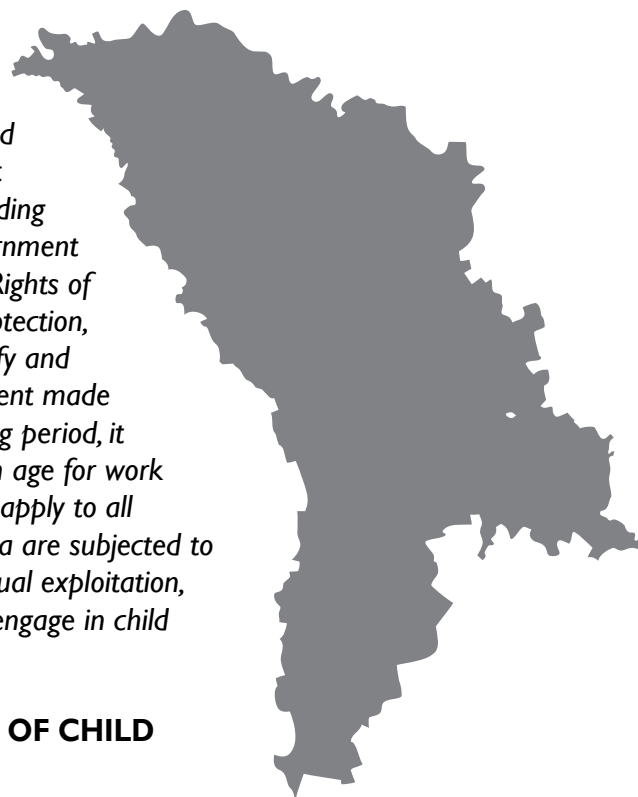
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In 2022, Moldova made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Moldova enacted a law in December 2022 which authorizes labor inspectors to perform onsite, unannounced inspections if inspectors have information or suspicion that certain types of labor violations may be taking place, including child labor and trafficking in persons. In addition, the government reactivated the National Council on the Protection of the Rights of Children, established a new National Program for Child Protection, and signed a joint order between three ministries to identify and assist children at risk of child labor. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, it does not meet the international standard for the minimum age for work because the Labor Code's minimum age provisions do not apply to all children working in the informal sector. Children in Moldova are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Moldova.

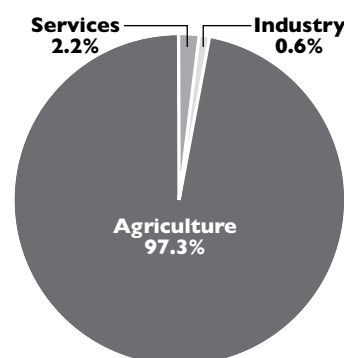
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	24.3 (102,105)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	29.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		107.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey-Child Labour Survey (LFS-SIMPOC), 2009. (2)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Agriculture,† including growing and harvesting crops, picking fruits, and raising farm animals (3-10)
	Forestry, including transporting heavy loads (9)
	Fishing, including feeding fish (9)
Industry	Construction,† including carrying heavy loads (3,6,8,9)
	Manufacturing (3,5)
	Working in the garment sector (5,7)
	Baking,† including confectionary and food preservation (5,7)
	Sanitation and waste management (6)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including portering, begging, and washing cars (3,5,6,10-13)
	Domestic work (7,13)
	Working in hospitality, retail, restaurants, amusement parks, and transportation (3,5-7,13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3-5,7,8,10,13-15)
	Forced begging (5,7,8,10,13,15)
	Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs (5,6)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




Trafficking of children, particularly those from rural or poor families, continues to be a concern in Moldova, including in the separatist region of Transnistria which is outside of the de facto control of the Moldovan government. (3,4,16,17) Traffickers exploit both boys and girls ages 5 to 14 for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation as well as in forced labor. (4,14) Children abandoned by parents who have migrated abroad, living on the street, or those who are refugees remain particularly vulnerable, and observers express concern that corrupt management in state residential institutions like orphanages exploit children in domestic services or on farms. (3,4,16,18) Online commercial sexual exploitation of children has increased in recent years, partially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. (3,4,8,18) Lack of information limits an assessment of the types of work that children perform and the sectors in which they work, including in the separatist region of Transnistria, which is not under the de facto control of Moldovan authorities. Civil society sources report that the child labor situation in Transnistria does not differ significantly from the rest of Moldova. (3) However, survivors of child labor and human trafficking in Transnistria do not have access to Moldovan legal protections or social services. (4)

Children in Moldova are guaranteed free transportation to school, and no fees are required for schooling through grade 10. However, students in grades 10 through 12 are often charged fees to rent textbooks. (3) Children from Roma communities also continue to be less likely to enroll in school and at higher risk of dropping out due in part to discrimination by school officials and distrust of public institutions by Roma families, and are more vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking. (3,5,14) Schools in rural areas often lack a sufficient number of teachers, and public schools lack adequate resources to address the needs of children with disabilities. (3,5,6)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Moldova has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Moldova’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including minimum age protections that do not extend to children working in the informal sector.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Article 46 of the Labor Code (19)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 255 of the Labor Code; Article 3 of the Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (19,20)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Government Decision No. 541; Articles 2 and 3 of the Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Articles 103, 105, 255, and 256 of the Labor Code (19-21)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 44 of the Constitution; Article 168(b) of the Criminal Code; Article 7 of the Labor Code; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (19,20,22,23)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2 and 25–30 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Article 206 of the Criminal Code (20,23,25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 175, 206, and 208 of the Criminal Code; Article 6 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Law No. 207 (20,23,26,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 208 and 217 of the Criminal Code; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (20,23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 12 of Law No. 162-XVI on the Status of Military Servicemembers (28)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 28 of Law No. 1245-XV on the Preparation of Citizens for Homeland Defense (29)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 26 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 206(d) of the Criminal Code (23,26)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Articles 13 and 152 of the Education Code of 2014 (30)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 35 of the Constitution; Article 9 of the Education Code of 2014 (22,30)

On December 22, 2022, Moldova's Parliament passed a law which came into effect in March 2023 and newly empowers the State Labor Inspectorate (SLI) to conduct unannounced visits at worksites if they have information or indications of certain violations, including trafficking in persons or labor exploitation. (3,18) However, as this law does not grant the authority to conduct unannounced inspections if there are any other direct or indirect means of obtaining the necessary information, potential violations of child labor laws and other labor abuses may remain undetected. The government also amended Law 316/2022 to certify that during the investigation of cases of sexual abuse or exploitation of children, minors should be interviewed in special settings in accordance with international standards. (18) However, the Labor Code's minimum age provisions do not meet international standards because they do not apply to all children working in the informal sector. Although Article 46(3) of the Labor Code permits children as young as age 15 to work, the law also does not specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken. (19) In addition, the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (19,30)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, restrictions on unannounced inspections conducted at the national level in Moldova may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws during the reporting period.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection's (MHLSP) State Labor Inspectorate (SLI)	Enforces child labor laws through inspections of labor relations of enterprises, institutions, and organizations. (5,6,9,31) Publishes an annual report on the previous year's activities. (5,32) Also operates a dedicated children's hotline which refers child survivors of trafficking for specialized legal, psychological, and social services under the National Referral System (NRS). (3,5,18)
Ministry of Internal Affairs	Oversees law enforcement agencies such as the National Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP), which leads criminal investigations against perpetrators of human trafficking crimes, including the trafficking of children for labor or commercial sexual exploitation. (3,14) The CCTIP also cooperates with the Border Police Inspectorate, National Anti-Corruption Center, and Customs Service, and provides partial funding for the operation of a 24/7 trafficking in persons hotline. (3,4) Also contains the Center for Combating Cybercrime, which investigates cybercrime, including online commercial sexual exploitation of children, and is the unit with primary responsibility for investigating these crimes at the National Inspectorate for Investigations of the General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (5,33)
Specialized Prosecution Office for Organized Crime and Special Cases and Anti-Trafficking Bureau within the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO)	Monitors and analyzes human trafficking cases in the Anti-Trafficking Bureau within the PGO. (6,8,11) Includes a unit that investigates and prosecutes cases, including online and digital child sexual exploitation cases. (3)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, the lack of authorization to conduct unannounced inspections at the national level in Moldova may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$705,364 (5)	\$1,050,000 (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	104 (5)	66 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (34)	Yes (34)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	2,279 (5)	1,600 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	31 (5)	18 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	6 (5)	6 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	3 (5)	5 (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (35)	No (35)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (5)	Unknown (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (3)

In 2022, the SLI supported several training sessions on safe working conditions for all employees, including those under 18 years old, as well as on the prevention and disruption of informal work, forced labor, and human trafficking. These trainings included both new employee trainings and refresher courses for experienced inspectors, as well as training focused specifically on child labor. (3) Between January and November 2022, SLI labor inspectors conducted approximately 1,600 onsite inspections, of which 16 were targeted at identifying child labor violations. During the reporting period, the SLI responded to four direct complaints and six referrals from the police of suspected child labor. (3) The SLI identified 18 labor law violations involving minors, and courts imposed fines against 6 employers. The SLI also reported that eight children were removed from child labor as a result of labor inspections. (3)

In October 2022, Government Decision number 725 was signed into law which decreased the SLI staff limit to 84 directly hired labor inspectors. The MHLSP states that this change is intended to improve the SLI by increasing salaries to attract and retain highly qualified inspectors. (3) During the reporting period, only 66 of these

84 positions were filled, which approximates ILO recommendations for the size of Moldova's workforce. (3,36) However, the SLI has reported that its funding is insufficient to procure modern equipment, and that this hinders labor law enforcement. (3,5,6,9) Revisions to Law No. 131 on State Control of Entrepreneurial Activity were passed in December 2022 which granted the State Labor Inspectorate authority to directly issue penalties for some labor law violations which had previously required judicial approval. If an inspector finds that certain non-criminal violation of labor law has occurred, excluding informal employment or underdeclared labor, they must issue recommendations to the offender on how to resolve the violation. (3) If the violation is not resolved after the prescribed period (no less than 30 days, but no more than 90 days), then the SLI may refer the case to a competent court. This approach often results in employers making the recommended remediation to avoid a fine, then resuming the offending practice after the case has been cleared. (3)

Although Law No. 131 empowers inspectors to perform unannounced onsite inspections if labor exploitation is alleged or suspected, laws and practices introduced as part of government restructuring in 2017 and 2018 continued to limit the power of the State Labor Inspectorate (SLI) to enforce child labor laws. Laws No. 179 and No. 131 mandated that all labor inspections begin with a desk review and permit site visits only if the subject of an inspection provides insufficient documentation or if a risk assessment procedure finds reasonable indicators of a possible violation. (3,5,6,9,14,35,37) Site visits, including those conducted in response to complaints, could not take place until after the target of an inspection had 5 days to respond to a request for documents, which served as de facto advance notice of an inspection. (6,8,9,35,37) Inspectors were only permitted to forgo the documentary inspection and proceed directly to an onsite inspection with managerial approval if a risk assessment indicates an immediate threat to the environment, life, health, or property. (35,37) Furthermore, onsite labor inspections could focus only on the potential violations that have been identified in advance through either the complaint process or a desk review, even if other violations, such as child labor, were observed. (8,38,39) In 2022, these strict measures continued to limit the number and scope of onsite inspections, including unannounced inspections, that labor inspectors were empowered to conduct, and labor inspectors are still not authorized to perform routine, on site, unannounced inspections as a standard practice. (3)

When reporting inspection data, the SLI divides inspections into two categories—those that appear on the annual inspection plan and those that arise during the year when triggered by complaints or incidents. The latter are considered to be unannounced whether they are preceded by a desk audit or not. (3,5) It is therefore not possible to determine whether any truly unannounced inspections took place in 2022, and if so, how many. (3) Both government and NGO sources reported that the child labor violations identified by the government during the reporting period did not reflect the magnitude of the child labor problem in Moldova due to an insufficient number of labor inspectors, budget limitations, cultural acceptance of child labor on family farms, and legal limitations on the government's ability to conduct inspections. The number of child survivors of abuse, trauma, and exploitation supported by NGOs is substantially greater than the number of government investigations of such cases. (3,5,8) The Transnistrian region is not under the de facto control of Moldovan authorities, who are prevented from carrying out inspections and law enforcement there. (3,5,8)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Moldova took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of funding for new criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	55 (40)	22 (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	15 (40)	26 (3)
Number of Convictions	22 (40)	3 (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (40)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (3)

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In 2022, 15 new law enforcement officers attended 3 initial training sessions on trafficking in persons and child labor laws. Authorities also opened 22 new cases, initiated the prosecution of 26 individuals for crimes involving the worst forms of child labor, and the CCTIP identified a case of suspected forced labor involving six boys. (3) The PGO sentenced three individuals convicted of trafficking children to prison terms of between 6 and 10 years. In addition, five survivors of trafficking successfully filed civil cases against the defendants, each of whom was awarded 20,000 MDL (\$1,043.80). (3) Criminal investigators within the CCTIP have well-furnished offices as a result of U.S. Government support over the last 12 years. However, the CCTIP does not have sufficient vehicles or fuel allocations for its daily investigation activities, nor does it have updated computer equipment. (3) High staff turnover in the past year has also hindered the CCTIP's effectiveness. (3,4) Many authorities still lack adequate training to identify potential child trafficking victims. (8)

Within the judiciary, specialized judges are trained specifically to handle cases involving human trafficking and other related crimes, such as child pornography, but special interview services for child survivors of human trafficking are also not uniformly applied which can result in re-traumatization of survivors. (4,10) In 2022, the government amended the law exempting child victims and at-risk victims from required attendance in court proceedings and began implementing video recording of interviews to prevent re-traumatization. The government also amended the law to ensure child victims of sexual abuse or exploitation, including trafficking, were interviewed in specially equipped rooms in accordance with international standards. (41) While NGOs had previously reported that judges sometimes reclassified cases from human trafficking crimes to crimes with lesser penalties, such as pimping, there were no such instances reported in 2022 and the practice was not reported to be widespread. When such reclassification occurs, victims of human trafficking are no longer protected by the provision of the criminal code that exempts trafficking victims from criminal liability for offenses committed because of their exploitation. (4,8)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coordination among bodies responsible for identifying children in child labor and providing services for their rehabilitation.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP)	Coordinates efforts to prevent and eliminate child trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Members include SLI, Security and Intelligence Service, Agency for Public Services, and other government departments. (3) In June 2022, met to present and approve a policy on preventing and eliminating trafficking in persons and to implement the recommendations of international monitoring mechanisms. (3)

In 2022, the government reactivated the National Council on the Protection of the Rights of Children (NCCRP), and the MHLSP implemented an intersectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, assessment, referral, assistance, and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of violence neglect, exploitation, and trafficking. However, civil society organizations have reported limited services for resocialization and reintegration for child survivors of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and there is room for increased cooperation between social protection, health, and law enforcement in this regard. (3,4)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Program for Child Protection (2022-2026)†	Sets the objectives and priority actions for the next five years which aim to strengthen children's social protection system. Includes an Action Plan containing 72 actions to address child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including through online means. (3,42)

† Policy was established during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (9,43)

On November 17, 2022, Moldova's Parliament approved the National Development Strategy “European Moldova 2030,” which includes provisions to improve working conditions and reduce informal employment. (3)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including insufficient services for resocialization and reintegration of child survivors of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Decent Work Country Program (2021–2024)	ILO program that aims to gather statistics on the prevalence of child labor, build the capacity of the labor inspectorate, and eliminate labor exploitation in the construction and agriculture sectors. (44)
Center for Protection and Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking†	Government-funded shelter for survivors of human trafficking from Moldova that offers accommodations, rehabilitation, and reintegration services, and which contains a special wing for child survivors. The shelter remained active through the reporting period. (3)
Social Aid Program and Social Support for Families with Children‡	Provides cash assistance to families. The Social Aid Program, implemented by the district departments of social assistance and family protection, has provided aid for low-income families since 2008. (5,6,45)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Moldova.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,11,15)

To strengthen the child protection system, the MHLSP signed a memorandum of cooperation with UNICEF to provide support for 25,000 families with children from September 2022 to September 2023. (3,46) Additionally, on November 25, 2022 the MHLSP, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education and Research signed a joint order approving new reporting on child welfare issues. (3) Observers report there are insufficient services for resocialization and reintegration of child survivors of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. (5,6,8,10)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Moldova (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the Labor Code covers children working in the informal sector.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 16 to 18 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors are empowered to identify and assess penalties for child labor violations detected during inspections, even if the inspection was not conducted in response to a child labor complaint.	2019 – 2022
	Increase funding for the State Labor Inspectorate and the National Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons to ensure that they provide inspectors and investigators with the resources necessary to inspect for child labor.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors receive training specific to child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that judicial authorities and investigators, including police officers and National Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons investigators, receive training on laws and investigative techniques related to the worst forms of child labor, especially related to online child pornography and children left without parental care.	2016 – 2022
Coordination	Pursue prosecution of child labor crimes under appropriate statutes and maintain protection under the law for victims who commit crimes as a result of their exploitation.	2020 – 2022
	Improve cooperation among social protection, health, and law enforcement entities with regard to providing appropriate services and reintegration assistance to child survivors of labor exploitation and trafficking in persons.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs, including for the separatist region of Transnistria.	2013 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Provide adequate resources for schools in rural and poorer communities, as well as those serving children with disabilities.	2020 – 2022
	Implement oversight of state residential children's institutions to prevent exploitation of children by management.	2021 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education by removing informal fees for school supplies, including textbooks.	2018 – 2022
	Institute targeted support programs that eliminate discrimination and violence against Roma children and promote equal access to education.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure sufficient social, psychological, and financial support for child survivors of trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and abuse, and children working in agriculture.	2015 – 2022

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In 2022, Mongolia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Mongolia's revised Labor Law includes a formal prohibition of child labor exploitation and sets the minimum age for work at age 15. The National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia also published a qualitative study on child labor with support from the International Labor Organization. In addition, under the Child Protection Compact Partnership, the government trained community social workers and educators on trafficking in persons prevention and victim identification.

Children in Mongolia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in horse jockeying and mining. The revised Labor Law legalized unannounced labor inspections that can result in sanctions. However, confusion remains amongst inspectors on whether unannounced inspections are permitted, which may impede enforcement of child labor laws. Lastly, due to a lack of training and formalized screening procedures, criminal law enforcement officials sometimes detain child victims of prostitution rather than referring them to social services.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mongolia. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	11.4 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	12.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		97.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2022, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Animal husbandry,† including herding† (3,4)
Services	Working in restaurants/canteens,† bars,† and food processing facilities.† (5)
	Horse jockeying† (3,6,7)
	Scavenging in garbage dumpsites (3,4)
	Handling freight† (3,5)
	Domestic work† (3-5)
	Ticket-taking for public transportation† (3)
Industry	Street work and begging (3)
	Construction† (3,5)
	Mining† coal,† gold, and fluorspar (3,8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3-5,9)
	Forced labor in begging and stealing (4)
	Forced labor in construction, mining, horse jockeying, animal husbandry, and contortionist work (4)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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In 2022, the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia published a qualitative study on child labor and included information about the results of the study in its 21st Annual Status Report on Human Rights and Freedom. (3,5,10) This study included a survey on work hazardous to the health of a child, which confirmed that children continue to be working at night, carrying loads, and working in construction, in bars and restaurants, and in food processing. (5) In 2022, at least 34,051 children were horse jockeys in Mongolia, with more than 32,000 not meeting safety requirements. Research indicates that 330 children fell off their horses between May 1 and November 1 of the reporting period, and 3 children died falling during races. (3,11) Races also continued through the winter despite a ban. (5)




Mongolian children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in saunas, bars, hotels, karaoke clubs, and massage parlors. (4,7) Mongolian girls are vulnerable to sexual exploitation in communities near mining towns or are recruited through social media. They are also forced to work as contortionists, domestically and in Turkey. (4,5,8,9,11)

Poverty, family debt, and a lack of educational opportunities are major reasons that children engage in child labor. (9,12,13) Roughly one-fourth of Mongolia's population live in poverty, and two-fifths of poor people in Mongolia are children under the age of 15. (14) Mongolian children encounter numerous education barriers due to an insufficient number of schools, overcrowding, a lack of trained teachers, inadequate school dormitories in rural areas, and a lack of accessibility for children with disabilities. (3,8,11,15)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mongolia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mongolia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a minimum age for work that is lower than the compulsory school age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Articles 2, 3, 142.1, and 165 of the Revised Labor Law (16)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 2, 3, and 142.2 of the Revised Labor Law; List of Jobs and Occupations Prohibited to Minors; Article 16.10 of the Criminal Code (16-18)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2 and 3 of the List of Jobs and Occupations Prohibited to Minors; Article 8 of the Law on the National Naadam Holiday (17,19)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 142.2 of the Revised Labor Law; Articles 13.1, 16.4, and 16.10 of the Criminal Code; Articles 2, 3, 15, and 17 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons; Article 7 of the Law on Labor; Article 7 of the Law on the Rights of the Child (16,20-23)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons; Article 13.1 of the Criminal Code (18,23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 12.3, 13.1, 16.8, 16.9, and 115 of the Criminal Code; Articles 8.1.3 and 10.2 of the Combating Pornography and Prostitution Act; Article 3 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (21,23,24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 142.2 of the Revised Labor Law; Article 192 of the Criminal Code (16,18)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 12 of the Law on Military (25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 12 of the Law on Military (25)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 46 of the Law on Education (26)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 16 of the Constitution of Mongolia; Articles 6.1–6.3 of the Law on Education (26,27)

Mongolia's revised Labor Law of January 1, 2022, sets the minimum age for work at 15, with light work permitted for children ages 13 and older. It also allows unannounced labor inspections in the formal sector. (3,16,28) The minimum age for work provisions do not meet international standards because they do not provide penalties for violations of these provisions. (16)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP) issued decree No.A/123 that outlines the type of light work allowed for children between the ages of 13 and 15 years. (29) In June 2022, the Law on Naadam Festival was also amended to raise the minimum age for horse jockeying from 7 to 8 years old and requires all child jockeys to have 1-year accident insurance to cover their time spent training and racing. (3) While this law makes it illegal for children younger than 8 to race horses, this age is far below the minimum age for hazardous work, which is set at 18. (16,19,20,30)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has other established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
General Agency for Specialized Inspection	Was the central agency for inspections, including labor inspections. It also previously enforced labor laws, including those related to child labor. (9,28) In November 2022, Mongolia moved its labor inspectorate from the General Agency for Specialized Inspection to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP). (3,31)
Criminal Police Department (CPD)	Oversees several specialty units that enforce child labor laws. (32) CPD oversees the Anti-Trafficking Unit and the Organized Crime Division which uses an 11-question risk assessment to accurately identify human trafficking victims and uses referrals to open criminal investigations into human trafficking and sexual exploitation cases. (3,15) The Division for Combating Against Domestic Violence and Crimes Against Children comprises 10 officers who provide guidance to police units and protection services for survivors of child labor. (31) The National Police Agency assigned 53 police officers nationwide to exclusively mitigate crimes against children. (9,31) Cybercrimes involving children are investigated by the Division to Combat Cyber Crimes. (3) This includes cases of online sexual exploitation of children. (31)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
MLSP	In November 2022, the labor inspectorate was moved to MLSP. In April 2022, it adopted guidelines for identifying and referring victims of human trafficking. (3) The Family, Child, and Youth Development Agency (FCYDA) within the MLSP employs 41 child rights officers who oversee child protection issues, including child labor. They can identify and remove children working under hazardous conditions. (3,10) FCYDA also runs a child safety complaint hotline, helped translate an online training package on child labor, and maintains a database that tracks the case status and social service needs of vulnerable children. (3)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Mongolia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of training on collecting data that would be useful for prosecutors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (28)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	86 (28)	86 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (20)	Yes (33)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (28)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	1,364 (28)	1,874† (3,31)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (28)	Unknown† (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (28)	Unknown† (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (28)	Unknown† (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (28)	Yes† (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (28)	Yes† (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (34)	Yes† (16)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (28)	Yes† (3,31)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (28)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (28)	Yes (3)

† Data are from March 1, 2022, to November 1, 2022. (3)

In 2022, there were 1,835 agricultural labor inspections that could only result in recommendations and educating employers on child labor regulations. Inspectors found 1,074 children working during these inspections. (31) The inspectors issued 29 recommendations and wrote 64 letters to employers requesting that they address child labor issues. In addition, 39 labor inspections conducted by the Family, Child, and Youth Development Agency (FCYDA) were specific to child labor and resulted in sanctions. (31) Research found that the FCYDA and the General Agency for Specialized Inspection (GASI) collected approximately \$11,888 (41,000,000 MNT) in fines from child labor penalties from March 1 to November 1, 2022. (3)

Mongolia's revised Labor Law permits its labor inspectorate to conduct unannounced inspections. This law supersedes the Law on State Inspections, which prohibited unannounced inspections, but confusion remains amongst inspectors on whether unannounced inspections are permitted. (16,31,34) In addition, GASI inspectors lacked training on what labor inspection information to collect that would be useful to prosecutors. This may have impeded the number of penalties imposed related to labor law violations. (31,35) After GASI was dismantled, research could not confirm whether labor inspections were conducted by the FCYDA, the Criminal Police Department, or the labor inspectorate recently moved to the MLSP. (3,31) In addition, there is a lack of information about labor law enforcement efforts that were undertaken before GASI was dismantled. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mongolia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (28)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	23 (28)	75 (3,31)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (28)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	0 (28)	0 (31)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (28)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (28)	Yes (31)

In January 2022, 40 criminal investigators attended a training called Ending Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, conducted by the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children. (9,36) While the number of prosecutions related to child labor is unknown, the Prosecutor General reported prosecuting crimes involving children in sexual exploitation, prostitution, pornography, and human trafficking. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit found 22 children involved in commercial sexual exploitation and 52 children involved in pornography. (3)

While the Criminal Police Department has a risk assessment checklist to identify survivors of human trafficking, district police officers have not been trained to use this checklist to identify potential cases that should be referred to specialized investigators. There are concerns that many cases of child trafficking have been dropped at the district police level for this reason. (3) Research indicates that perpetrators are able to evade punishment due to a lack of training relating to the Child Protection Law and the Criminal Code. (3,37,38) Additionally, criminal investigators lack sufficient funding and training focused on child labor. (3) Mongolia has a mechanism for referrals between authorities and social services, but it is ineffective. (31) Formal labor inspections regularly include both the police and the FCYDA, so referrals usually occur informally while they are working together. (3)

There continues to be a misconception among many government officials that only girls can be victims of human trafficking. As a result, many cases involving boys are not prosecuted under the human trafficking article of the Criminal Code, but instead under other offenses that carry lighter penalties. (4,8) No boys have been identified as victims of human trafficking in 10 years, despite continued reports that Mongolian boys are being trafficked. (4) Research noted that complex case initiation and referral procedures, coupled with restrictions on contact between anti-trafficking police and prosecutors, at times hindered investigations and prosecutions. (4,15,39) Due to a lack of understanding of victim protection in relation to the Law on Petty Offenses, research found that police reportedly continued to detain child victims as a direct result of the unlawful acts they were forced to commit. (3,9,40,41) The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit acknowledged that underage girls are sometimes arrested and detained for prostitution due to a lack of formalized screening procedures and undertrained new police officers. (4,9)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of formal guidelines and referral procedures.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Multidisciplinary Task Force (MDTF)	Coordinates inter-agency efforts on child protection, investigates cases of child labor, and prosecutes criminals. (9,42) Includes 18 representatives from key government ministries and 1 NGO. (3,4) Supported NGOs and the Ministry of Education in training teachers from high-risk schools to implement after-school programs that helped high schoolers recognize and prevent child forced labor and sex trafficking. (3,9) Opened three safe spaces for children in police stations and provided guidelines for the use of those spaces. The government reported that more than 100 children benefited from these spaces during 2022. (3,9) Members of the MDTF participated in training on trauma-informed, child-friendly approaches to human trafficking cases. (9) The success of this task force was hindered by a lack of formal guidelines and referral procedures. This inhibited referrals for criminal investigation, social services, and reintegration assistance for cases involving children. (3)

In February 2022, the Prime Minister issued an order to renew the mandate of the National Committee for Children, which serves as the coordinating body for child protection efforts. (3,43) The National Anti-Trafficking Sub-Council and the Crime Prevention Coordination Council continue to address human trafficking, including the trafficking of children. (3,9)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a policy to address child labor in all its forms.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Child Protection Compact Partnership (2020–2024)	\$5 million USD cooperative agreement between the Government of Mongolia, the United States Government, and NGOs. (42,44,45) Consists of 18 governmental and non-governmental organizations to fund victim-centered, collaborative, and sustainable approaches to identify child trafficking victims. (28,46) Created the Multidisciplinary Task Force (MDTF) under the National Sub-Council on Trafficking in Persons. (3,42) Works with the Crime Prevention and Coordinating Council and National Sub-Council on Trafficking in Persons. (42,45) They also trained 200 Home Visitors who will educate communities on human trafficking prevention and victim identification. (3)

Research was unable to determine whether a policy exists that address child labor in all its forms.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the lack of programs to address child protection and raise awareness on child labor.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Enabling Equity to Advance Learning (EQUAL) (2022–2025)*	Supports children with disabilities in schools and improves school lunches and education. The Global Partnership for Education awarded this grant to the Ministry of Education. (47)
Children's Money Program†	Distributes a monthly stipend to vulnerable children under age 18 and aims to prevent child labor by offsetting costs related to food, school, and clothing. Operated by the General Agency for Social Welfare and Service, the General Agency for State Registration, and the Human Development Fund. (48,49) This program accounts for 3 percent of the GDP. Remained active during the reporting year. (50)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Mongolia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,51)

During the reporting period, the government has been implementing plans and programs to help children reintegrate into school and deter them from dropping out. (30) The Minister of Education and Science created a plan for the 2021–2022 school year, which resulted in students returning to the classroom who had been

considered at risk of dropping out. The Green Light action plan was also implemented in the 2021–2022 academic year, and it focused on supporting the reintegration of children back into school who had suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (30) In 2022, the social programs run by the government faced challenges due to inflation and increased unemployment. (3)

The government collaborates with NGOs to provide survivors with victim services. (3,4) The government ran at least two shelters that housed children who had been trafficked, but these children were not separated from the general population. Multiple children have been sexually abused at these shelters due to poor oversight. (4,52) The shelters that can accept child victims of child labor and sexual exploitation are temporary and can house children for 6 months at most. Additionally, all shelters are inaccessible for people with disabilities. (9)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mongolia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Establish legal penalties for violations of minimum age restrictions.	2022
	Ensure that laws adequately prohibit children under age 18 from horse racing at all times of the year.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors are authorized to enforce labor laws and receive training on data collection, the revised Labor Law, and the legalization of unannounced inspections that can result in sanctions.	2022
	Establish a functional, formalized mechanism for referrals between enforcement authorities and social services.	2022
	Allow anti-trafficking police and prosecutors to work with one another and ensure that evidence related to human trafficking cases is collected to support investigations.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the procedural checklists used to identify human trafficking victims are used consistently.	2019 – 2022
	Provide adequate funding for law enforcement agencies.	2022
	Strengthen the inspection system by conducting unannounced inspections and imposing penalties for any violations found.	2022
	Ensure that child trafficking victims are not fined, arrested, detained, or charged with crimes and administrative offenses as a result of having been subjected to human trafficking.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officials receive training on new laws related to child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Provide trainings for police officers and government officials on criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including the Child Protection Law and the Law on Petty Offenses, to ensure that child labor offenses are prosecuted fully, convicted traffickers are appropriately punished, and police discontinue the practice of detaining child victims.	2011 – 2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement data, including the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions, and whether penalties are imposed for violations relating to the worst forms of child labor.	2017 – 2022
Coordination	Create formal guidelines and referral procedures for the Multidisciplinary Task Force.	2022
Government Policies	Implement a policy to address child labor in all its forms.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem and ensure that they are sufficiently funded and staffed.	2020 – 2022
	Increase the number of schools to help eliminate overcrowding, increase the number of trained teachers, ensure that appropriate technology is available to all students, and provide infrastructure to allow full accessibility options for children with disabilities.	2019 – 2022
	Increase the length of stay available for children in shelter homes.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that all government-run and -funded shelter homes separate children from adults, are provided proper oversight so children are protected from sexual abuse, and are accessible to children with disabilities.	2019 – 2022

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In 2022, Montenegro made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Montenegro increased cash benefit payments to families with children at risk for child labor and allocated funding for the construction of the country's first shelter dedicated to children who are survivors of human trafficking. However, children in Montenegro are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Research found that the scope of programs to address child labor in street work is insufficient.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Montenegro. (1-3) Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	17.3 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	20.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		101.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including vending small goods and begging (7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,8)
	Forced begging (7)
	Forced domestic work (3,5,8)
	Use in illicit activities, including the harvesting and trafficking of drugs (1,6,7)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Montenegro is a source, destination, and transit country for trafficking of children for forced labor, including forced begging, especially among Roma children. (1,7,9) Some Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian girls from Montenegro are sold and forced into domestic servitude in both Montenegro and Kosovo. (10,11) Children, especially girls, are victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation internally and transnationally within the region. (1,7)

The inability to enroll in school makes some Montenegrin children vulnerable to child labor. Some Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian children, as well as some Kosovar children of persons displaced due to conflict, have difficulty accessing education services (along with other social services) because they lack birth registration documents. (12) In addition, some children with disabilities experience difficulty physically accessing educational facilities and have limited government social services available to them. (13,14)




Montenegro

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Montenegro has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 16 of the Labor Law (16)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 17, 172, and 173 of the Labor Law (16)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 104 and 106 of the Labor Law; Articles 7 and 8 of the Regulations on Measures of Protection in the Workplace (16,17)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 444 of the Criminal Code; Articles 28 and 63 of the Constitution (18,19)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 444–446 of the Criminal Code (19)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 209–211 of the Criminal Code (19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 300 and 301 of the Criminal Code (19)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 47, 188, and 195 of the Declaration of the Law on the Army of Montenegro; Articles 162 and 163 of the Law on the Armed Forces (20,21)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Articles 47, 188, and 195 of the Declaration of the Law on the Army of Montenegro; Articles 162 and 163 of the Law on the Armed Forces (20,21)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 444 of the Criminal Code (19)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 4 of the Law on Primary Education (22)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 75 of the Constitution (18)

* Country has no conscription (20)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Labor Inspectorate	Leads and monitors the enforcement of labor laws, including those that protect working children. (9,22,23) Part of the Inspectorate General and has 15 offices that proactively plan labor inspections. (22) The Labor Inspectorate also maintains a national call center and an e-mail line for receiving complaints. (22,23)
Ministry of Interior	Houses the Police Directorate and the Office for the Fight Against Trafficking in Humans (Trafficking in Persons Department). An eight-member unit within the Police Directorate investigates human trafficking, forced labor, and illegal migration. (23) Also investigates reports of child begging, develops policy to prevent future cases of forced begging, and removes child beggars from the streets through the Beggar Task Force. (7,24) Through its TIP Department, coordinates government efforts against human trafficking, harmonizes legislation, maintains data on human trafficking, and funds hotlines for reporting human trafficking cases. (23) Police refer children found begging or requiring social assistance to public institutions that provide accommodation, protection, education, and therapy for vulnerable children. (6,22) During the reporting period, the TIP Department continued to expand staff capacity to coordinate the identification and referral of victims of human trafficking. Additionally, TIP Department staff members participated in anti-trafficking in persons trainings facilitated by the IOM and the OSCE Mission to Montenegro. (25)
Supreme State Prosecutor	Investigates and enforces criminal laws on forced labor and human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. (24) Collects data on the number of police investigations, convictions, and court rulings, and submits them to the TIP Department. (24)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Montenegro took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including inadequate resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	44 (6)	44 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (16)	Yes (5,15)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (26)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	11,127 (6)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (6)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (6)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (6)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (26)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (26)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (26)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (26)

Labor inspectors can inspect registered farms, and the staff of the Social Welfare Centers (SWCs) can inspect unregistered farms to detect child labor. (3) Children found during labor inspections can be referred to SWCs and accommodated in a government-financed, NGO-run shelter for human trafficking victims. (3) If child labor is found by SWCs, social workers cooperate with labor inspectors and criminal law enforcement to ensure that children receive proper support and protection from further exploitation. Labor inspections increase during the summer months, particularly in the tourism sector throughout the coastal region. (3,22,27) Reports indicate that the number of inspectors is insufficient to adequately enforce its labor laws, particularly in cases involving the agricultural and domestic labor sectors. (5) In addition, the government maintains a database on children involved in begging, but it does not collect or publish data on child labor. (14)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, the government's criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (28)
Number of Investigations	4 (6)	5 (28)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (6)	4 (28)
Number of Convictions	1 (6)	0 (28)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (6)	Yes (28)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (28)

In 2022, police across Montenegro continued to implement "Operation Beggar" to discourage forced begging. Eleven children were also referred to the Shelter for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, including four children engaged in forced begging. (5)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Coordination Body for Monitoring and Implementing the Protocol on the Treatment of Bodies, Institutions, and Organizations in Montenegro with Children Involved in Street Life and Work	Created to coordinate intergovernmental work on issues specifically affecting children engaged in street labor. In November 2022, new members of the coordinating body were nominated, and the Ministry of the Interior led the process of revising sections of the Protocol. (5)

While the government continues to support the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and the National Council for the Rights of Children, there isn't a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address all worst forms of child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking (2019–2024)	Outlines objectives for addressing human trafficking by raising public awareness, strengthening the capacity for victim identification and services provision, improving interagency coordination, and raising the efficiency of prosecutions. (28) During the reporting period, the Government of Montenegro implemented the 2022 national action plan associated with this strategy. (5,25)
Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child in Montenegro (2019–2023)	Seeks to enhance the ability of children to exercise their rights by improving the application of laws related to children; supporting vulnerable children, including those with disabilities; and improving protections for violence against children, including from child trafficking, child prostitution, child pornography, and involvement in armed conflict. A working group is tasked with producing an annual report detailing the steps it has taken toward achieving the plan's goals. (29) Research was unable to determine whether the policy was active during the reporting period.
Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians (2021–2025)	Aims to create social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians by increasing school attendance and birth registration while preventing child begging and human trafficking. Implemented by the Ministry of Justice, Human, and Minority Rights. (6,31) Research was unable to determine whether the policy was active during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (6)

During the reporting period, the Government of Montenegro implemented the National Action Plan for 2022 associated with the National Strategy for Combatting Human Trafficking (2019–2024). Additionally, government institutions continued to adhere to the Protocol on the Treatment of Bodies, Institutions, and Organizations in Montenegro with Children Involved in Street Life and Work to continue promoting the safety and wellbeing of children in economically vulnerable situations. (5)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Country Program (2017–2022)	Addressed access to social services for children, synchronized the legal framework with EU and UN standards, implemented and monitored policies relevant to children, and applied the principles of the UN CRC. During the reporting period, UNICEF continued to administer country program-associated activities in conjunction with the Government of Montenegro. (31)
Development of Standard Operating Procedures for the Treatment of Children Deprived of Parents or Unaccompanied	Implemented by the Ministry of Interior's TIP Department and UNICEF. (25) Goals include standardizing procedures among all relevant institutions for dealing with unaccompanied children and children separated from parents, and ensuring compliance with both international and national laws for children. (33) Includes procedures on identifying, serving, and integrating these children. (33) Research was unable to determine whether the program was active during the reporting period.
Hotline for Victims of Human Trafficking†	SOS Hotline funded by the TIP Department and run by the NGO Montenegrin Women's Lobby. Provides advice, connects victims with service providers, and raises public awareness. During the reporting period, the Hotline continued to receive calls from victims of trafficking. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Montenegro.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (7,38,39)

The Government of Montenegro increased the availability of social assistance to vulnerable children, including an expansion of cash benefits beginning in October 2022. (31) Additionally, the government approved the construction of the country's first state-operated shelter for child victims of human trafficking. (5) Provision of services to individuals with disabilities who are victims of human trafficking remains limited, and though the Government of Montenegro has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially for street work and forced begging. (5)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Montenegro (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Consistently track and publish information about children involved in the worst forms of child labor, including data on the sectoral distribution of child labor.	2017 – 2022
Coordination	Establish a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address all worst forms of child labor.	2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor during the reporting period and that data on these activities are published.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Build the capacity of schools and other services and programs to accommodate and provide support for children with disabilities.	2015 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, especially in street work and forced begging.	2018 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Make additional efforts to bolster birth registration for children from the Ashkali, Balkan Egyptian, and Roma communities to ensure equity in children's access to the educational and social welfare systems.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2020 – 2022

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Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in Montserrat, in 2022, the government made no advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. Montserrat also continued to implement a law that delays advancement to prevent the worst forms of child labor. Labor inspectors do not have the authority to conduct unannounced inspections, as they must obtain either the business owner's consent or a search warrant to enter a business for the purposes of performing an inspection. The lack of unannounced inspections may leave potential violations of child labor laws and other labor abuses undetected in workplaces. In addition, the Labor Code allows children as young as age 14 to engage in light work; however, Montserrat does not have a list of activities that constitute light work, nor does it specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken or limit the number of hours for light work. Additionally, the government has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children nor criminally prohibited the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides one key indicator on children's education in Montserrat.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education





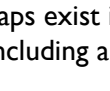

Children	Age	Percent
Primary Completion Rate (%)		96.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019 published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

British Overseas Territories recognize the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the UK but are constitutionally not part of the UK. They are self-governing, except in the areas of foreign affairs and defense. (3) Domestic UK law does not generally apply unless explicitly extended to Montserrat. (3) Under Article 35(4) of the ILO Constitution, when the UK ratifies a Convention, the Territory must consider if it will accept the Convention. If the Convention is accepted, it is considered applicable to that Territory. (3,4) No key international conventions concerning child labor have been accepted by Montserrat (Table 2).

Table 2. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	
 UN CRC	
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The Government of Montserrat has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 3). However, gaps exist in Montserrat's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to criminalize the use of children in illicit activities.

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Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Parts 3 and 9 of the Labor Code (5)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Parts 3, 9, and 10 of the Labor Code (5)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Part 9 of the Labor Code (5)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Part VIII-A, Sections 138A, 138D, and 202D of the Penal Code; Part IV, No. 55 of the Constitution Order (6,7)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Part VIII-A, Sections 138A–D, and Part XIV-A of the Penal Code (6)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Part VIII-A, Sections 138A and 138B of the Penal Code (6)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Articles 3 and 96(8) of the Labor Code (5)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Articles 3 and 96(8) of the Labor Code (5)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Chapter II, Part 3 of the Education Act (8)
Free Public Education	Yes		Chapter II, Part I of the Education Act (8)

* Country has no conscription (3)

The Labor Code allows children as young as age 14 to engage in light work; however, Montserrat does not have a list of activities that constitute light work, nor does it specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken or limit the number of hours for light work. (5) The Minister of Labor for Montserrat is responsible for deciding what constitutes hazardous work; however, Montserrat has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (5,9) In addition, the law does not criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. (5,9)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, Montserrat has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor	Conducts labor inspections pursuant to the Labor Code under the Labor Commissioner. (9) According to Article 8 of the Labor Code, labor inspectors must obtain either the employer's permission or a search warrant to enter a business for the purposes of performing an inspection. As a result, labor inspectors do not have the authority to conduct unannounced inspections. (5)
Royal Montserrat Police Service	Enforces the laws of Montserrat, including worst forms of child labor laws. (10) Responsible for criminal investigations and pursuing criminal proceedings in cases of child abuse of any kind. (11)
Department of Social Services	Verifies the credibility of reports on the abuse of children. (11) If the allegations are true, the Social Services Department meets with the police to decide on a course of action with the child in mind. The police will take over the criminal investigation while Social Services ensures the protection of the child. (11)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in Montserrat (Table 5).

Table 5. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2020 – 2022
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities/conditions in which light work may be undertaken by children as young as age 14 and limit the number of hours for light work.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is authorized to conduct unannounced inspections.	2019 – 2022

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In 2022, Morocco made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government convicted five civil servants on charges related to the sexual exploitation of children or forced child labor. It also drafted a national strategy against human trafficking and developed a guide to help government ministries identify trafficking victims. Additionally, the government increased the number of labor inspectors by over 23 percent, from 404 in 2021 to 500 in 2022. However, children in Morocco are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. The Labor Code's minimum age for work provisions do not meet international standards as children 15 years of age and under are not protected when working in traditional artisan and handicraft sectors. Furthermore, the scope of government social programs is insufficient as they do not fully address children exploited through domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Morocco.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	4.5 (150,178)
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	82.9
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	0.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		107.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2022, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from *Enquête sur la Population et la Santé Familiale (DHS), 2003–2004*. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3)
	Fishing (3)
	Forestry, activities unknown(3)
Industry	Textiles (4)
	Construction† (5)
	Production of artisanal crafts (6)
Services	Domestic work (3,4,7)
	Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles (4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, as a result of human trafficking (3,4)
	Forced domestic work (4,7,8)
	Forced begging (4,6)
	Forced labor in artisanal crafts, textile, construction, and mechanics (4)
	Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,4)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Approximately 2 percent of Moroccan children, between the ages of 7 and 17, are economically active, with more children working in rural areas than urban areas. (3) Of these economically active children, 6 out of 10 are performing hazardous work. (9) Roughly 80 percent of child labor victims are boys from rural areas. (3) Rural Moroccan girls, some as young as age 8, are recruited for domestic work in private urban homes, a practice known locally as *petites bonnes*. (8,10) Some of these girls are subjected to physical and verbal abuse, excessive working hours, confiscation of identity papers, and denial of access to educational opportunities by their employers. (7-11) In addition, exploitation in domestic work makes children vulnerable to child sex trafficking within Morocco and elsewhere, such as Spain and the Persian Gulf. (12)

Morocco





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Research identified an increase in migrant children—both Moroccan natives and sub-Saharan Africans immigrating through Morocco—traveling to Europe, particularly Spain. Most of these children were unaccompanied and lacked access to stable housing, exposing them to poverty and social exclusion, increasing their vulnerability to child labor. (13,14) Children in Morocco, particularly in rural areas, also face barriers to education, including the cost of school materials, poor facilities, and transportation issues. (15) Approximately 85 percent of children who are economically active have left schooling. (3) Some children must reside in boarding houses to attend school due to long commutes, and some families are reluctant to allow children—particularly girls—to make the daily journey for fear of exposure to risks associated with traveling to school. Other barriers to education include fees associated with after-school activities and the required documentation for school enrollment. (15) Identification documents are sometimes denied to children in rural areas who are born to unmarried parents. (16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Morocco has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Morocco's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a minimum age for work that does not meet international standards.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Articles 4, 143, and 151 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Law No. 19-12 (17,18)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 147 and 150 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Law No. 19-12 (17,18)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Child Labor List, Decree No. 2-10-183; Articles 179 and 181 of the Labor Code (17,19)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 448.1, 448.4, and 448.5 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings; Articles 10 and 12 of the Labor Code; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code (17,20,21)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 448.1, 448.4, and 448.5 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (21)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 497–499, and 503-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (20,21)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Law number 1-73-282; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (20-22)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No		

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 4 of Law No. 44-18 (23)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (21)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article I of Law No. 04-00 (24)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article I of Law No. 04-00 (24)

The 2016 Law on Setting Up Employment Conditions of Domestic Workers prohibits employing children under the age of 18 in domestic work with a transition period of five years. During the reporting period, the minimum age for domestic work was 16. (18) However, the Labor Code does not apply to children who work in traditional artisan or handicraft sectors for family businesses with five or fewer employees. (17)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills (MEIPEEC)	Enforces child labor laws with its 54 inspection offices throughout the country. (3,6) Partners with civil society organizations working to remove children from child labor and provide them with an education or vocational training. (3,25) MEIPEEC's priorities in the 2022 National Labor Inspection Plan include upholding workers' representation rights and focusing inspections on temporary work agencies, security, gardening, construction, and cleaning companies. (3)
Ministry of the Interior	Through the General Directorate of National Security, enforces prohibitions on trafficking in persons, prostitution, and other exploitative crimes involving minors, as established in the Penal Code. (3)
General Prosecutor	Prosecutes criminal offenses against children and processes cases involving children in the court system. Serves independently as a judiciary body separate from the Ministry of Justice. (3)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Morocco took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills (MEIPEEC) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (6)	\$750,000 (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	404 (6)	500 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (6)	Yes (3,17,20)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	18,776 (6)	29,068 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	998 (6)	522 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	5 (6)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (3)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (17)	Yes (3,17)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (6)	No (3)

Between January 2022 and February 2023, 522 children were removed from hazardous working conditions, with 332 of these children being younger than 15 years of age. (3) The National Observatory for Children's Rights also established an online portal and reporting mechanisms on its website to provide more ways to report child abuse, including child labor. This complements the hotline already in use for formal child labor complaints. (26) In 2022, the government increased the number of labor inspectors by over 23 percent, from 404 to 500 in total. (3,6) Of the 500 labor inspectors in Morocco, 101 are contractors rather than public servants. (3) Due to the instability of contract employment, the authority and training of these labor inspectors may be called into question. Despite this increase in inspectors, research indicates Morocco does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (27-29)

The official procedure to process a child labor violation requires the participation of several agencies, which places considerable administrative burden on labor inspectors. In some areas, there are informal referral mechanisms between labor inspectors and social services maintained through the court system, but coordination varies from region to region. (3,30) Despite the existence of regulations on implementing the 2016 Law on Setting Up Employment Conditions of Domestic Workers, enforcement remains challenging, as unannounced inspections of private residences, in which many child domestic workers are employed, cannot be conducted without a court order in accordance with 2018 Labor Law (Law 19-12). (6,31) Penalties for employing children in hazardous work are also insufficient to act as a deterrent to child labor, as labor inspectors generally recommend removing children from their employers before imposing any penalties, and may not impose penalties if the employer ends the employment of children. (15,32,33)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Morocco took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the lack of publication of criminal law enforcement data.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (30)	Yes (26,34)

In 2022, law enforcement agencies identified 27 child victims of servitude and forced labor, and 66 child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. (26,35) Also during the year, five civil servants were convicted on charges related to sexual exploitation or forced labor of minors. (35) However, the government did not provide information on the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, or penalties imposed for the worst forms of child labor for inclusion of this report. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coordinating bodies to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission for the Coordination of Measures to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates the government's efforts to address trafficking in persons. Led by the Ministry of Justice, with 22 members representing various ministries and civil society organizations. (3,4,26) In 2022, the Commission completed a guide for human trafficking indicators to help government ministries identify trafficking victims and organized a workshop on establishing strong national referral mechanisms for trafficking victims. (35) In March 2023, the Commission also enacted a new trafficking strategic plan. (34)

Although Morocco has a committee to coordinate efforts to address trafficking in persons, as well as the Technical Committee Under the Special Ministerial Commission for Children for the Protection and Improvement of Childhood to address child protection in general, it does not have an active coordinating mechanism to address all forms of child labor. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards related to child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Ministry of Solidarity, Social Inclusion, and Family (MSISF) Integrated Public Policy on the Protection of Children in Morocco	Promotes an interdisciplinary approach to respond to the exploitation of children and other issues. (36) Implemented by MEIPEEC. (3,26)
National Strategy to Address Trafficking in Persons†	Aims to raise awareness of human trafficking and improve the identification and referral of victims to services. Enacted in March 2023 with assistance from international partners. (34,35)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In late 2022, MEIPEEC made arrangements with the ILO and NGOs to draft a strategic action plan to address the worst forms of child labor. (3,26)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Social Cohesion Support Fund†	Programs that aim to improve access to education. Include the MSISF-funded Tayssir Conditional Cash Transfer Program, which provides direct cash transfers to qualifying families whose children meet school attendance criteria. (15) These cash transfers continued in 2022. (26)
Government-Funded Projects‡	Projects that aim to assist vulnerable children, including the After-School Program for a Second Chance, which provides students with after-school educational assistance as part of non-formal education programs; Mouwakaba, a MSISF-funded project that assists nearly 2,700 at-risk youth in 6 cities with vocational training; and "Cities Without Street Children," which provides assistance to homeless children in Casablanca and Méknes. The projects remained active in 2022. (37-40)
AMAL Program	Supports the efforts of the Moroccan authorities to ensure an environment conducive to the development and autonomy of children and young people in migration and refugee status. Implemented by UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF under the coordination of the UN's Office of the Resident Coordinator. (30,41) The AMAL program was active in 2022. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Morocco.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (15)

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Although the government has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including for children engaged in forced domestic work. This is especially apparent in rural areas, given the extent to which children engaged in labor and commercial sexual exploitation is likely underreported. (40)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Morocco (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children age 15 and under are protected by law, including children who work in the traditional artisan and handicraft sectors for family businesses.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.	2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child for prostitution.	2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 500 to 819 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 12.3 million people.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is made up of public servants rather than contractors to avoid complications related to the training and authority of these inspectors.	2022
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including penalties imposed and collected for violations of the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Impose penalties whenever child labor violations are found.	2012 – 2022
	Reduce administrative burdens for inspectors referring children to services and streamline child labor enforcement procedures among government agencies.	2013 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal enforcement efforts, including the number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, number of convictions, and penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2012 – 2022
	Establish referral mechanisms between labor law enforcement authorities and social services where they do not currently exist and strengthen existing informal networks for this purpose to ensure effective coordination on child labor cases.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Establish a mechanism to coordinate government efforts to address all worst forms of child labor.	2022
Social Programs	Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, including in rural areas and in forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.	2013 – 2022
	Collect and publish information on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs, including in farming and forestry.	2016 – 2022
	Remove barriers to education, such as insufficient facilities and a lack of reliable and safe transportation, particularly in rural areas.	2013 – 2022

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In 2022, Mozambique made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government convened its first annual National Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor and held awareness campaigns about child labor in all provinces. However, children in Mozambique are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in the production of tobacco. In addition, the established minimum age for work is not in compliance with international labor standards because it does not extend to informal employment. Lastly, existing social programs are insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem in Mozambique.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mozambique.

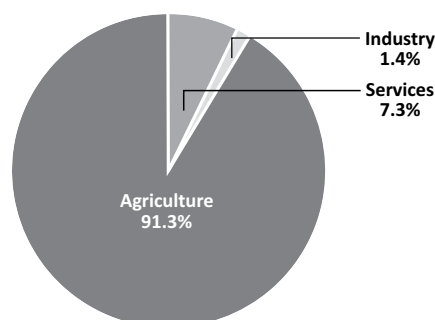
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	16.2 (1,270,866)
Working children by sector	5 to 14	
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	63.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	10.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		58.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: *Inquérito Sobre Orçamento Familiar (IOF)*, 2015. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of cashews, coconuts, cotton,† sugarcane,† tea, tobacco,† and tomatoes (3-6)
	Fishing,† including handling nets (6-9)
	Forestry,† including cutting wood, and climbing trees to collect fruit (3,6,9)
	Herding livestock, including cattle (3,6)
	Hunting, including small and wild animals (3,4)
Industry	Artisanal mining,† including gold and gemstones,† and breaking stone† (3,6,7,9,10)
	Construction† (3,7)
	Brickmaking (6)
Services	Domestic work,† including childcare† (3,6,7,10)
	Street work, including car washing† and street vending (3,6,9-11)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,6,7,9,12,13)
	Forced labor in agriculture, domestic work, mining, and vending (6,14)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking, stealing, and assisting poachers in the illegal poaching industry (3,6)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (6,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Mozambican children, lured from rural areas with promises of work and educational opportunities, are subjected to forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation in urban areas in Mozambique and South Africa. Research indicates that Mozambican children are also trafficked to South Africa for forced labor in agriculture, mining, and street vending. (6,7,12,16) Research found that children in larger cities and along transit corridors are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. The U.S. government-designated terrorist group ISIS-Mozambique also abducted and used children as soldiers, cooks, and laborers in northern Mozambique. (6,15)

Although primary education is free through the ninth grade, families must provide school supplies and uniforms. (7,9,17) Barriers to education for children also include a lack of schools, classroom space, and trained teachers. Many students, particularly in rural areas, face difficulties traveling long distances to get to school. (6,18,19) In addition, physical and sexual abuse is common in schools and research found that some male teachers coerce female students into sex. (5,20) The government estimates that only 49 percent of children complete their primary education. (5,6,9,21) Further, some LGBTQI+ students faced discrimination at secondary schools, with documented cases of discrimination in the major cities of Beira, Maputo, and Nampula. (5,6,9) By the end of 2022, approximately 1 million people, more than 50 percent of them children, were displaced due to increased terrorist-related violence in Cabo Delgado Province, up from more than 800,000 people the previous year; the increased rate of displacement creates additional barriers to secondary education for some children due to a lack of secondary schools or overcrowding. (5,6,9,22-24)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mozambique has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mozambique's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections for children without formal employment relationships.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 26 of the Labor Law; Article 4 of the Regulations on Domestic Work (25,26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 23 of the Labor Law (26)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes	18	Hazardous Work List (27)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 10, 11, and 17 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 196 and 198 of the Penal Code (28,29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 5, 10, and 11 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 5, 10, and 11 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 226 and 227 of the Penal Code (28,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 33 and 40 of the Law on Drugs (30)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 23 of the Law on Military Service (31)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of the Law on Military Service (31)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 5 and 10 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (28)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 41 of the Law of Basic Child Protection; Article 7 of the Law on the National System of Education (32,33)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 41 of the Law of Basic Child Protection; Article 7 of the Law on the National System of Education (32,33)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (32,33)

The Labor Law's minimum age protections do not meet international standards as they do not apply to children working outside of formal employment relationships. (26,33-35) The Labor Law also states that children between the ages of 12 and 15 may work under certain conditions defined by the Council of Ministers, and the Regulations on Domestic Work allow children between the ages of 12 and 15 to perform domestic work with the permission of their legal guardian. (25,26) However, this minimum age of 12 for light work is not in compliance with international standards, as the age for light work should be 13 years old. (34,36)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MITESS)	Enforces child labor laws and regulations. The labor inspectorate works with the National Police Force to enforce criminal law. (9) Monitors implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (6,9,17,37) During the reporting period, MITESS trained police units and community leaders on child labor prevention. Additionally, it held awareness campaigns about child labor and child labor trafficking in informal markets, schools, religious sites, and communities in all provinces. (6,15) In April 2022, MITESS convened the government's first annual National Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor, and subsequently held eight province-level conferences on child labor and trafficking. Government agencies, civil society organizations, and other partners were included in these discussions. (15)
Ministry of Industry and Commerce's General Inspectorate of Economic Activities	Enforces child labor laws and regulations related to business activities and holds awareness-raising events on child labor. (6,9,17)
Ministry of Interior and the Attorney General's Office	The National Police Force functions under the Ministry of the Interior and enforces all criminal laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Through its seven-person National Criminal Investigation Service, located within the Ministry of the Interior, investigates and refers cases of human trafficking and violence against women and children to the Attorney General's Office. (6,9,17) The Attorney General's Office coordinates the government's efforts against human trafficking and child labor, and leads the National Reference Group for the Protection of Children and Combating Trafficking in Persons. (6,9,17)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Mozambique took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MITESS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	129 (9)	156 (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	8,650 (9)	7,647 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (9)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (9)	N/A (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (9)	N/A (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Unknown (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (6)

Mozambique hired an additional 27 labor inspectors in 2022. (6) Limited resources, such as insufficient fuel and vehicles, may also hamper the labor inspectorate's ability to enforce child labor laws. (6,7,9,17) MITESS officials can refer survivors of child labor to either the police or social workers from the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Action (MGCAS) for family assessments and potential placement of these children in foster homes. (7,9) During the reporting period, MITESS worked with police and immigration officials to conduct awareness-raising activities in markets, schools, and locations where there may be child labor. These activities included disseminating information about work considered dangerous for children and the risk of trafficking children for labor purposes. (5,9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mozambique took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the absence of published criminal enforcement data related to child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (6)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (9)	2 (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (6)

The government did not publish data on some criminal law enforcement efforts, such as the number of prosecutions initiated, convictions secured, and whether penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor were imposed. (6) However, in 2022, the government trained judicial officials on issues related to the worst forms of child labor and hosted several other trainings for border officials on child labor and human trafficking. (6) Criminal law enforcement officials also worked with the MGCAS and the National Reference Group for the Protection of Children and Combating Trafficking in Persons to refer vulnerable children to

social services providers. (17) The MGCAS has a standard operating procedure with guidance on how to assist survivors of domestic abuse, including human trafficking survivors. This standard operating procedure incorporates an intake form used nationwide by law enforcement officials, including border officials, to collect the necessary data from survivors and ensure that they receive professional care and referrals to appropriate services. (36)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of coordination between existing mechanisms.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Multisectoral Group on Child Labor	Led by MITESS, serves as the main coordinating mechanism for child labor, and is responsible for implementing the National Action Plan on Child Labor. Includes representatives from every ministry, reports to the Prime Minister, and submits regular reports to the Council of Ministers. (6) In collaboration with the National Reference Group, assists children found in child labor, including its worst forms. (6) Research was unable to determine whether the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor was active during the reporting period.

The National Reference Group (NRG) supports efforts to prevent human trafficking and is the main coordinating body for addressing human trafficking nationally. Led by the Attorney General, in partnership with local leaders and NGO stakeholders, the NRG holds regular meetings to discuss child labor issues. (9,16) In collaboration with provincial-level groups, the NRG uses a national referral mechanism to connect child labor and human trafficking survivors to services, and facilitates training of officials and awareness-raising campaigns. (5) The government has also set up cross-border groups with each of its neighbors. (9) Research indicates that there is a need to clarify responsibilities and strengthen coordination between the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor and the NRG. (6) The Council of Ministers is charged with monitoring the government's coordination efforts in addressing child labor, and each ministry has a designated point of contact for child issues. (8) During the reporting period, the NRG and its sub-national groups met regularly to discuss child labor and human trafficking cases. (15) The government also held sensitization campaigns nationwide, raising awareness about child labor and human trafficking issues on community radio. (6,15)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2017–2022)	Addressed the underlying reasons for child labor and geographic regions of concern (Tete, Manica, Maputo Province, and Maputo City), and focused on principal sectors in which child labor occurs (mining, domestic work, and agriculture). (7) Included activities such as mapping 70 percent of occurrences of the worst forms of child labor by province, and withdrawing 20,000 children from the worst forms of child labor and enrolling them in the Basic Social Subsidy program. (37) Mandated the coordination of several key government agencies, including the Attorney General's Office and the Office for Assistance to Families and Children Victims of Violence in the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Action (MGCAS), among others. Also created a multi-sector group comprising representatives from the government, civil society, unions, and employers in the formal and informal sectors to collaborate on issues identified in the plan. (7) During the reporting period, the government trained judicial officials, including judges, and border officials on the contents of the plan. (6)
Strategic Plan for the Preparation, Response and Recuperation of the Education Sector in Cases of Emergency	A 10-year strategic plan that aims to provide safe and quality education nationwide during and after emergency situations, focusing on the need for strong interventions to protect children, as well as the harmful effects of child labor. (9,38) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Strategic Plan for the Preparation, Response and Recuperation of the Education Sector in Cases of Emergency during the reporting period.

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Memorandum of Understanding to Combat Child Labor in Tobacco Growing (2018–2024)	\$1.2 million, 3-year project funded by the Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing Foundation, focusing on education, awareness raising, institutional capacity building, and revision of the government's legal framework. Incorporated training for law enforcement officials. (39-41) Although the program was extended until 2024, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Memorandum of Understanding to Combat Child Labor in Tobacco Growing program during the reporting period. (6)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

During the reporting period, the NGO-funded Child Talk Line (*Linha Fala Criança*), which is a hotline that receives complaints of child abuse, including those related to child labor and sexual exploitation, received at least 45 calls related to child labor. The government continues to provide technical support, and the hotline referred calls to the police and judicial actors. (6) However, research found no evidence that the government has carried out programs to assist children engaged in domestic work, and the scope of existing programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mozambique (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Extend minimum age protections for all children, including children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2015 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for light work from 12 years old to 13 years old to comply with international labor standards.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish all data on labor law enforcement efforts, including the labor inspectorate's funding and whether targeted and unannounced inspections were carried out.	2009 – 2022
	Provide labor inspectors with adequate financial resources, including vehicles and fuel, to ensure their capacity to enforce child labor laws.	2009 – 2022
	Publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts, such as the number of prosecutions initiated, convictions secured, and whether penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor were imposed.	2009 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure responsibilities between the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor and the National Reference Group are clearly defined, and strengthen coordination between the two agencies.	2022
	Ensure the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor effectively coordinates efforts to address child labor and reports on its activities on an annual basis.	2022
Government Policies	Finalize and fully implement the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Take measures to ensure that all children, including children in displaced communities, have access to education by providing supplies, uniforms, and an adequate number of schools, classroom space, and trained teachers; address barriers for children from rural areas; take preventative steps to protect children from physical and sexual abuse in schools.	2010 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken to implement the Memorandum of Understand to Combat Child Labor in Tobacco Growing.	2018 – 2022
	Institute programs to address child labor in domestic work and expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, Namibia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In March, the government launched the Social Protection Policy to provide a framework to strengthen existing protection mechanisms, including the Child Disability Grant and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Grant, both of which provide monthly supplemental payments to children vulnerable to child labor. However, children in Namibia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in agricultural work, domestic work, and street work. Prevention and elimination of child labor are not integrated into key national policies, and social programs do not address child labor in agriculture and domestic work. The government also did not publish data on labor law or criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Namibia. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		109.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization’s analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working on farms and gardens (3-8)
	Fishing, activities unknown (8,9)
Services	Domestic work (5,6,8-11)
	Street work, including begging and food service, including selling fruits, phone vouchers, and small goods (7,8,10-14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,8,10,11,15-17)
	Use in illicit activities, including organized begging, selling of drugs, and smuggling of fuel, diamonds, and wildlife products (8-11)
	Forced labor in agriculture, fishing, and domestic work (8,16-18)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

An extended drought and economic downturn in northern Namibia and southern Angola have likely affected children’s vulnerability to child labor, including its worst forms. Children from rural areas move to urban centers, such as Windhoek, in pursuit of supplemental income for their families, and some of these children engage in selling drugs, organized begging, and commercial sexual exploitation. (3,7,8,10,12) There was a significant increase

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in the number of Angolans migrating to Namibia as a result of climate change-induced drought, which has led to emerging trends of locals hiring Angolan children as domestic workers, for street vending, and for agricultural activities. In addition, NGO and local media reporting indicates children of refugee status along the border of Namibia and Angola are increasingly recruited by criminal organizations to smuggle drugs, fuel, diamonds, and wildlife products. (8,11,18,19) The majority of child victims of trafficking in persons are recruited under the pretext that they will be given the opportunity to attend school. (20)







Children are trafficked within Namibia and from neighboring countries, such as Angola, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, for forced labor in agriculture, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation. (9,18) Commercial sexual exploitation most commonly involves girls and occurs in cities and transit corridors, especially along the Namibian and Angolan border. Both girls and boys increasingly are subjected to internet-based forms of sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography. (3,8-11,21) It is also a common practice for parents to place their children in the care of relatives and kin relations for expanded education opportunities; in some cases, these children are subjected to forced labor. (18) Children of the San and Himba ethnic groups are particularly vulnerable to forced labor on farms and in homes. (7,17,21,22) Research indicates that some child domestic workers are subjected to physical abuse by their employers. (23)

Both primary and secondary education are free by law; however, long distances to schools, particularly in rural and remote locations, may deter some children from attending school and increase their vulnerability to child labor. (24-26) In addition, educational completion is beyond the means of many families, especially in rural areas; the barriers faced by rural learners were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures. (8) The Education Act stipulates that no child be denied education due to documentation. (8,11,25) However, reporting indicates inconsistent regional enforcement of this law, and that some children from nomadic communities or migrant families have difficulty securing birth registration and other identification documents, which sometimes results in delays in enrollment and school admission. (11,27) Furthermore, children orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic or other causes sometimes become heads of households, which may require them to leave school to find work. (24) Reports also highlight that the educational needs of children with disabilities or special learning needs have not been addressed due to lack of qualified inclusive education teachers, disability-friendly infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, and assistive technologies. (8,11)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Namibia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Chapter 2, Article 3(2) of the Labor Act (28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Chapter 2, Article 3(4) of the Labor Act; Article 2(2) of the Labor Act (Regulations Related to Domestic Work); Article 15(2) of the Constitution (28-30)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Chapter 2, Articles 3(3)(d) and 3(4) of the Labor Act (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Chapter 2, Article 4 of the Labor Act; Article 9 of the Constitution; Articles 202 and 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Section 15 of the Prevention of Organized Crime Act (28-31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 202 and 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Section 15 of the Prevention of Organized Crime Act; Chapter 2, Article 3(2) of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (30-32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 2 of the Combating of Immoral Practices Amendment Act; Section 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act (30,32)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act (30)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 17 of Defense Act I of 2002 (Government Notice 189 of 2010) (33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 234(1)(b) of the Child Care and Protection Act (30)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Section 9 of the Promulgation of Basic Education Act, 2020 (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Sections 19 and 67 of the Promulgation of Basic Education Act, 2020 (34)

* Country has no conscription (35)

The Namibian Parliament passed an updated Promulgation of Basic Education Act in 2020, which raised the age of compulsory education up to age 18 or until the completion of secondary school. (19,34) Although Namibia's light work framework for children ages 14 to 18 has a list of activities that are not permitted—including work done underground, in construction or demolition, in places in which goods are manufactured, and in places in which electricity is generated or distributed—and prohibits night work, Namibia's light work framework is insufficient because it does not prescribe the number of hours children ages 14 to 18 may work. (28)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC)	Enforces child labor laws and investigates allegations of violations, including forced labor; cases involving human trafficking, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Works on child labor matters with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety, and Security (MHAISS); the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication, and Social Welfare (MGEPEWSV); the Namibia Central Intelligence Service; and the Ministry of Education. (13,36) Refers children removed from child labor during inspections to MGEPEWSV for placement in social services. (37) Operates an SMS line for labor complaints, including child labor. (13)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Along with the Namibian Police Service (NAMPOL), responsible for enforcing criminal laws against forced child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, recruitment/use of child soldiers, and/or use of children in illicit activities. MOJ coordinates enforcement efforts of criminal laws against child labor and NAMPOL is responsible for the arrest of those offending and contravening the law. (8)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety, and Security (MHAISS)	Enforces criminal laws through NAMPOL. Coordinates with the labor inspectorate of MLIREC to investigate criminal labor violations, including child labor. (36,38,39) Through NAMPOL's 15 Gender-Based Violence Protection Units, collaborates with MGEPEWS and MLIREC to remove children from human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, while providing medical and psychosocial care for survivors. (36)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Namibia took actions to address child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2,809,065 (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	2,582 (40)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (41)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (41)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (41)	Unknown (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (41)	Unknown (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (13)	Yes (13)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)

The government did not provide information about labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (8) Research suggests that while the number of labor inspectors is unknown in Namibia, the current number is likely inadequate to carry out their mandated duties. (9,42) Additionally, the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC) did not make public the number of child labor complaints received through their 24-hour short message service (SMS) for labor complaints in 2022. (19)

The data related to child labor are provided by the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation (MIRCO), which is the main source of information on child labor in Namibia. Government ministries and agencies, including MLIREC and the Namibian Police Service (NAMPOL), as well as NGOs can only submit data to MIRCO, which then screens, filters, packages, and submits the information to relevant stakeholders. (8) This data consolidation process presents difficulties when comparing official data to information supplied by NGOs because there is no longer a separation between the two data sets. (8)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Namibia took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	0 (16)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. The government does not maintain centralized statistics for regional magistrate court cases, which limits information on criminal law enforcement efforts in response to the worst forms of child labor. (24) Law enforcement officials report that, as children are increasingly exposed to online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC), they face difficulties in investigating reported cases due to limited legislation, lack of training and funding, insufficient standard operating procedures related to OSEAC, and the absence of a relevant database. (43) In addition, although there are 15 Gender-Based Violence Protection Units in Namibia, previous research indicates considerable variation in the operational performance of these units. Due to resource constraints, only the Windhoek-based unit operates at full capacity, and several other units are unable to function according to their intended mandates. (9,13)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coordination across government agencies and with civil society organizations.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interministerial Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates government policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. Comprises officials from MLIREC, the Ministry of Education, MGEPEWSV, and MHAISS. (44) Research was unable to determine whether the Interministerial Committee on Child Labor was active during the reporting period. (19)

During the reporting period, there were reports of communication breakdowns between government ministries and civil society, likely minimizing the effectiveness of the ministries in addressing child trafficking and child labor. (20)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Agenda for Children (2018–2022)	Led the strategy around child welfare issues with a focus on strengthening the protection of children in need of care, including enforcement of laws protecting children from child labor. (45) Outlined procedural instructions for each ministry and stakeholder to respond to cases of child mistreatment. (36,38,46) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Agenda for Children during the reporting period.
Social Protection Policy (2022–2030)†	Launched by MGEPEWSV during the reporting period. Aims to improve coordination of social protection mechanisms and provides a framework to strengthen child grants through the optimization of child grant-related data, reviewing and developing the implementation mechanism, and creating linkages between relevant government agencies. (47,48)
National Development Plan V (2017/2018–2021/2022)	Outlined goals for addressing child trafficking and protection concerns. (36,49) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Development Plan during the reporting period.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (50,51)

In May 2022, the Ministry of Labor and a delegation comprising its social partners participated in a conference in Durban, South Africa to contribute to a call for action to eliminate child labor in Africa. (11,22) Although the 5-year National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons for 2022–2027 was due to launch in late 2022, coordination issues at the operational level—including unclear delineation of responsibilities among the agencies involved in its development and implementation—delayed adoption. (18) Furthermore, the Ministry of

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Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare's 2019–2023 National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence does not address worst forms of child labor, such as physical abuse occurring in domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation. (51) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Social Protection Grants†	MGEPEV-funded grants to support vulnerable children and households. (52) Includes child maintenance grants, place-of-safety allowances, and foster care grants. Child maintenance grants provide monthly stipends to single-parent families and are contingent upon school enrollment of all school-age children; place of safety and foster care grants provide support for people and places that provide temporary care for children. (53-55) During the reporting period, the government approved increases for the Child Disability Grants and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Grant, effective in 2023. (56)
Shelters and Victims Services‡	Government and NGO shelters provide safe accommodations, meals, clothing, toiletries, psychosocial support, legal assistance, medical services, and access to education. (13,44) Registered residential childcare facilities provide services for children experiencing mistreatment and neglect. The government provides subsidies, either per child or as a percentage of operating expenses, for private shelter facilities. (46,57) Research found that government shelters were not active during the reporting period. (19)
Decent Work Country Program (2018–2023)	ILO-funded program to promote decent work in Namibia, including the elimination of child labor, through employment promotion, enhanced social protection, and social dialogue and collaboration. (6,58) Prioritizes institutional capacity for implementation of child labor policies, and research and data collection on child labor and trafficking in persons. (6) Research was unable to identify activities undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period. (19)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Namibia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (36,59,60)

During the reporting period, the Government of Namibia established a high-level task force to operationalize goals set at the UN's Transforming Education Summit and aimed at creating inclusive, equitable, and safe schools in the country. (47)

Although the government provided assistance and services to vulnerable children and some victims of child labor, research found no evidence of programs specifically addressing children working in agriculture or domestic work. (8,20)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Namibia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that Namibia's light work framework prescribes the number of hours children ages 14 to 18 may work.	2022
Enforcement	Publish information on criminal and labor law enforcement efforts undertaken during the reporting period, including labor inspectorate funding; number of labor inspectors; training for labor inspectors and criminal investigators; number and types of labor inspections conducted; child labor violations found; child labor-related penalties imposed and collected; number of criminal investigations; prosecutions initiated; number of convictions; and information about reciprocal referral mechanisms.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that training is provided to labor inspectors, including training of new inspectors and refresher courses.	2021 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that training is provided to criminal law enforcement investigators on laws related to child labor, including training for new investigators.	2018 – 2022
	Employ at least 64 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information on the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation's SMS hotline, including the number of child labor complaints reported through the mechanism.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure clear procedures at the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation for receiving, consolidating, and preparing child labor-related data submitted by stakeholders and publish data stratified by source to ensure information transparency.	2022
	Establish a mechanism to compile and publish comprehensive statistics related to labor and criminal law enforcement, including convictions for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that all Gender-Based Violence Protection Units have adequate resources, including consistent funding, to operate according to their intended mandates.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies are sufficiently funded and resourced in order to adequately address online sexual exploitation and abuse of children, as well as other worst forms of child labor.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Interministerial Committee on Child Labor is funded, fully active, and able to carry out its intended mandate of coordinating policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Improve ministries' effectiveness in addressing child labor by establishing a framework for communication between government ministries and civil society organizations for prompt referral of cases.	2022
Government Policies	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement policies relevant to child wellbeing, including the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, and publish results from activities implemented on an annual basis.	2016 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies as well as other worst forms of child labor into key national policies, including the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in all sectors it is known to occur, including fishing, to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to make education accessible and affordable for all children, particularly in rural areas; including by expanding social support to orphaned children, reducing long travel distances to schools or improve transportation to schools, increasing the number of qualified teachers, and addressing the needs of students with disabilities and special learning needs.	2019 – 2022
	Expand opportunities for birth registration and national documentation for all children, including children of nomadic and migrant communities, to improve access to education and social programs.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement the Decent Work Country Program and the government-run shelters for victims of exploitation and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022
	Institute programs or expand existing programs to address child labor in agriculture and domestic work.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Nepal made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Nepal announced the liberation of the Haruwa-Charuwa agricultural bonded laborers and promised to establish a recovery program and provide restitution for this group. The police also removed 27 children exploited as bonded laborers from brick kilns in southern Nepal and the Nepal Child Rights Council provided assistance to 11,696 children across 47 districts through 417 children's homes. However, children in Nepal are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced begging. Children also perform dangerous tasks in producing bricks. Nepal's law related to child trafficking is insufficient because it does not clearly criminalize recruitment, harboring, receipt, or transportation in the absence of force, fraud, or coercion. The law prohibiting the use of children in illicit activities is also insufficient because it does not prohibit the use of children in the production of drugs. In addition, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security lacks sufficient resources and labor inspectors to adequately enforce laws related to child labor. Moreover, the government did not publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Nepal.

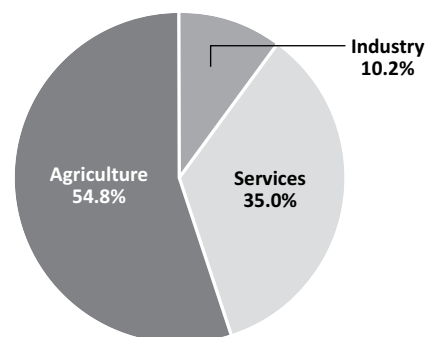
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	20.4 (1,093,497)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	93.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	22.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		103.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2017–2018. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including tending livestock and harvesting caterpillar fungus (yarsagumba) (3,4)
Industry	Producing bricks, including loading and unloading of mules and donkeys (5,6)
	Quarrying, collecting, and breaking stones,† and quarrying and collecting sand (7)
	Construction,† activities unknown (3,8,9)
	Weaving carpets† (8,9)
	Producing embellished textiles (zari)† and embroidery (8,10)
Services	Producing metal crafts† (11)
	Domestic work (3,12,13)
	Working in mechanical shops, including for cars and motorbikes† (8)
	Vending, including as shop keepers, shop sales assistants, and tailors (3)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Working in transportation,† portering, and collecting recyclable waste (8,9,14)
	Working in hotels,† restaurants,† tea shops, and in entertainment,† including as dancers† (8,13,15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (13,16)
	Forced labor in embellishing textiles (<i>zari</i>), weaving carpets,† and domestic work (8,17)
	Forced labor in agriculture, producing bricks, quarrying, and breaking stones† (5,8)
	Use in illicit activities, including the cultivation and trafficking of drugs (8)
	Forced begging (16,18)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Nepali women and girls are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, both within and outside Nepal, including to India, the Middle East, Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. (13,19) Traffickers use the open border between India and Nepal to transport women and children for sex trafficking. (13) One study found that 17 percent of workers in the adult entertainment sector are under age 18, and 62 percent of adult women in that industry started as minors, some as young as 7 years old. (20)




More than half the children working in Nepali brick kilns are from India. (5) Children engaged in the production of bricks are exposed to hazardous working conditions, including carrying heavy loads and using dangerous machinery. (5) Most child labor occurs in the informal sector, including brick kilns. (7) Research indicates that climate-related disasters have often led to child labor, including increased levels of child labor following the 2017 floods in southern Nepal. (21) Moreover, children in Nepal's unregistered shelters are exploited in forced begging and children are trafficked into exploitative or fraudulent orphanages, which suffer from lack of government oversight, where they are used to solicit money from foreign donors. (22,23)

Some children, particularly girls, face barriers to accessing education due to a shortage of sanitation facilities, geographic distance, costs associated with schooling, need to complete household chores, and an absence of parental support. (24-26) In Nepal, lack of separate toilet facilities for girls deters them from attending school, especially when they are menstruating. (24) Barriers to attending school for school-age boys include pressure to find employment or migrate to work outside of Nepal, and issues with drugs and alcohol. Children with disabilities face additional barriers to accessing education, including denial of school admission. (7) Furthermore, pandemic closures affected nearly 9 million children and a substantial number of children from rural areas suffered from learning loss due to an unavailability of alternative learning modalities. (8,17,27) School closures during the pandemic disproportionately affected girls, who are expected to perform household services, and children with disabilities. (8) Refugee children in Nepal face legal obstacles regarding access to education resulting from lack of official recognition and official documentation by the Nepali government. (8,28) The government, however, allows NGOs to provide primary and secondary-level schooling to refugee children without documentation. (28)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Nepal has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Nepal's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of prohibitions for using children in the production of drugs.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 3 of the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (29)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	17	Section 3, 28(b) of the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (29)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Schedule 1 of the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (29)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 4 of the Bonded Labor (Prohibition) Act; Section 4 of the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act; Sections 2–4 and 15 of the Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act; Section 4 of the Labor Act (29-32)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Sections 3, 4, and 15 of the Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act (32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 66(3)(d) of the Act Relating to Children 2018; Sections 3, 4, and 15 of the Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act; Sections 16(2) and 16(3) of the Children's Act (32-34)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Section 16 of the Children's Act (34)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 7 of the Military Service Regulation 2069 (35)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 39 of the Constitution (36)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14	Article 31 of the Constitution; Section 6 of the Free and Compulsory Education Act (36,37)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 16D of the Education Act; Section 20 of the Free and Compulsory Education Act; Article 31 of the Constitution (36-38)

* Country has no conscription (36)

The minimum age for hazardous work is not consistent with international standards because it does not prohibit children age 17 from engaging in hazardous work. (29) Furthermore, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not include brickmaking and stone breaking, sectors in which there is evidence that work involves carrying heavy loads and being exposed to hazardous substances. (5,29) However, Nepal's National Master Plan on Child Labor (2018–2028) has identified children working in brick kilns as a group particularly vulnerable to hazardous child labor. (39,40) In addition, the law related to child trafficking is insufficient because it does not

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clearly criminalize recruitment, harboring, receipt, or transportation of children in the absence of force, fraud, or coercion. (32,41) The law prohibiting the use of children in illicit activities is insufficient because it does not prohibit the use of children in the production of drugs. (42) Furthermore, although the Constitution prohibits the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups, there is no specific legislation penalizing this practice. (36) Nepal ratified the Palermo Protocol in 2020 and the government is in the process of aligning its legal framework for human trafficking with international standards, including broadening its definition of human trafficking and better addressing child trafficking. (10,43)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor (DOL), Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MoLESS)	Enforces labor laws, including those involving child labor. (10,44) Conducts studies, provides training on child labor prevention, and monitors Nepal's child labor prevention program. (44)
Nepal Police	Investigate crimes involving women and children, including crimes related to human trafficking, through the Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau (AHTB). (45) Assist in children's rescue, rehabilitation, and coordination for the arrest of perpetrators in cases of the worst forms of child labor. (46) In cases of hazardous child labor, coordinate with and hand over cases to MoLESS. (10,17)
Monitoring Action Committees, Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens (MWCSC)	Investigate reports of commercial sexual exploitation at the district level, including the exploitation of children in the adult entertainment sector. (47) Contribute to investigations through Helpline No. 104 and Child Helpline 1098. Provide temporary shelter to child survivors through the Nepal Child Rights Council (NCRC) and support operations of the victim services center for children. (48)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Nepal took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Department of Labor (DOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$5,710† (4)	\$15,720‡ (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	16 (49)	11 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (31)	Yes (31)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (17)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	1,830† (4)	2,544‡ (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	16† (4)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	15† (4)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	15† (4)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (31)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (17)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (8)

† Data are from July 2020 to July 2021.

‡ Data from July 2021 to July 2022.

Only 11 of 28 labor inspector positions in Nepal are currently filled, and these inspectors oversee a workforce of approximately 8.7 million workers. (8,49,50) The ILO and NGOs report the number of labor inspectors and inspections in Nepal is insufficient given the size and population of the country. (8,50) During the reporting period, inspectors did not receive adequate training or refresher on laws related to child labor or hazardous work for children. (8) Reports confirm that funding for the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MoLESS) remains low and indicate that addressing child labor is a low funding priority for the government. (8) According to NGOs, more than 70 percent of child labor occurs in the informal sector, including in companies with fewer than 10 employees and those that are not registered with the government. (8,10,23) However, the government conducted most of its labor inspections in the formal sector and rarely conducted unannounced inspections. (8)

NGOs report that the fines and employer-paid compensation outlined in the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act are not adequate deterrents to child labor violations. (8,10) Cases are also often resolved through negotiation, and MoLESS encourages mediation over prosecution, resulting in mild punishments for perpetrators. (8,41) In addition, business owners reportedly pressure labor inspectors to settle disputes outside courts and officials request bribes to move cases forward. (8) Furthermore, NGOs stated that officials are sometimes paid to not move child labor cases forward, or parents are given nominal compensation to abandon cases. (8) While the Supreme Court compiles case data on cases heard by the labor court, it does not disaggregate data regarding child labor.(22)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Nepal took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (17)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (17)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (17)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (17)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (17)	N/A (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (8)

In 2022, the Government of Nepal announced the liberation of the Haruwa-Charuwa agricultural bonded laborers who belong to impoverished and marginalized Dalit communities. The ILO previously estimated that over 120,000 adults and children were in forced Haruwa-Charuwa labor. (51) Although the Bonded Labor Prohibition Act of 2002 abolished bonded labor in Nepal, the Haruwa-Charuwa were not previously part of government liberation or victim services programs. (30,51) As part of the Haruwa-Charuwa freedom proclamation, the government also promised to establish a victim services program and provide restitution for this group. (52)

Within the federalist government structure, child rights committees, which are formed at the provincial and local levels, coordinate with Nepal Police on child labor issues. (8) However, the government lacks both the human resources and financial capacity to enforce laws prohibiting crimes related to child labor or to maintain a centralized database of criminal cases involving child labor, including child trafficking. (8,10,11,53) The Nepal Police do, however, collect and disaggregate data related to human trafficking cases; in fiscal year 2021–2022, the Nepal Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau (AHTB) reported identifying 209 trafficking victims and temporarily detaining 284 suspected traffickers. However, 109 suspected traffickers absconded, and only 174 suspected traffickers were officially arrested. (54) Moreover, during the reporting period, AHTB conducted trainings for 66 police personal on investigating human trafficking and legal procedures. (55)

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The government convicted fewer traffickers during this reporting period compared to the previous year, and corruption as well as official complicity in trafficking crimes remains a concern. The AHTB and other enforcement agencies lacked resources to coordinate with NGOs or victims and were unable to register cases against traffickers. (23) Moreover, most human trafficking cases were treated as labor violations that MoLESS resolved with minor fines rather than opening criminal investigations. (56) The AHTB lacked a victim-centered approach to handling serious cases, and law enforcement relied on civil society to identify trafficking cases, undermining evidence collection and prosecution efforts. (23)

According to reports, in November 2022, Nepal Police released 38 Indian nationals, including 27 children, who had been exploited as bonded laborers in brick kilns in southern Nepal. (57) However, the government did not make efforts to investigate and prosecute suspects for bonded labor crimes and did not provide data on other bonded labor cases. (23) Moreover, cases of bonded labor are rarely reported to the police. (56)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Labor Prevention and Occupational Safety Section, MoLESS, and MWCSC	Coordinates policymaking and monitors implementation of child labor inspection guidelines. (44) Consists of an Under Secretary, one section officer, and one factory inspector. (58) Confers with the MWCSC, the National Child Rights Council, MoLESS, and District Labor Offices. (59) The National Child Labor Elimination Committee operates under the direction of the Secretary of MoLESS. There is also an ongoing interagency working group to address child labor and a Child Rights System at the local level. (8) In fiscal year 2021–2022, MoLESS declared 22 municipalities as "child friendly governments," integrating child participation and child-friendly practices in local governance. (55,60) The MWCSC coordinates the implementation of anti-human trafficking laws, policies, and programs at the central, district, and local levels of government. (4,23) During the reporting period, the MWCSC provided anti-human trafficking training to rehabilitation centers. (55) In conjunction with the AHTB, the MWCSC also provided information-awareness programs on cybercrime and online trafficking to some districts. (55)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including updating existing policies to better align with the constitutional transition to federalism.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Master Plan to End Child Labor (July 2018–July 2028)	Prioritizes ending the worst forms of child labor by 2022, and all forms of child labor by 2025. (17) Includes a strategy to establish at the local and provincial levels a fund to help release child victims. (17,61) The Nepal Master Plan-II (NMP-II) has incorporated five strategies to eradicate child labor, including regular search and monitoring, victim release, and services for survivors. (8) The National Plan of Action designates the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation as the lead ministry to establish targeted programs for children involved in forced child labor and their families, particularly in the agricultural sector. (8,48) The ministry carries out awareness programs through cooperatives at local and provincial levels. (8,48) Ensures the poverty alleviation program provides economic empowerment to families to decrease the number of children from economically disadvantaged and marginalized families entering the labor market. (48) The NMP-II includes some indicators to ensure that inspections are performed properly. (8,17) Research was unable to determine if the action plan carried out any activities to address child labor during the reporting period.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Policy	Description & Activities
School Education Plan	Expands access to education to all children, improves the quality of education, and facilitates improved management and governance of schools. The program will impact 8.2 million schoolchildren in Nepal. (62) The New School Education Plan succeeded the former School Sector Development Plan, which was discontinued in July 2022. (63) For fiscal year 2022–2023, the program launched the School-Based Assessment pilot study to assess new curricula introduced for elementary education and draw recommendations for wider implementations. (64) The program also hosted capacity-building projects for local governments and teachers. (64) The policy implemented a web helpdesk for local governments for technical and administrative support. (64)
National Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2011–2022)	Promoted and protected the rights of human trafficking victims and survivors, and outlines policies for prosecuting and sentencing human traffickers. (65,66) During the reporting period, the government drafted a new national plan of action against human trafficking to replace the current action plan and better align with the Palermo Protocol. The action plan will be finalized and released in 2023. (55)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (10)

The Fifteenth National Plan of Nepal (2019/2020–2023/2024) includes ending child labor as one of its objectives and makes necessary legal provisions to end all forms of child labor and increase the target number of inspections for child labor in each Nepali fiscal year, which begins and ends in July. (8,10,67)

Nepal's new federalist structure replaced all districts with newly drawn provinces. There are 753 new municipalities from 77 districts along with new local governance. (68) However, Nepal requires improved coordination across all levels of government and guidance on responsibilities to effectively address gaps in implementation of services under the new federalist structure. (68) The absence of new policy frameworks for a multitude of issues and a lack of data to inform actions have reduced child labor abuses to a low priority. (68)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Child Rights, Rescue and Rehabilitation Program†	NCRC coordinates and facilitates monitoring, evaluation, and reviewing of local child rights on the provincial and local levels. (17,69) In fiscal year 2021–2022, the council provided protection to 11,696 children, including shelter, family reintegration, education support, and medical treatment. (8) The council also supported 10,905 children in 417 children's homes across 47 districts. (8) In addition, the NCRC monitored 164 children's homes across 43 districts and provided services to 72 children removed from unregistered shelter homes while reintegrating 1,200 children with their families. (55) During the reporting period, 308 local municipalities adopted the Child Rights Protection and Promotion Procedures and child rights committees were formed in 222 local governments. (8) The child protection procedures include collecting data on child labor and child trafficking, removals, and services for survivors, and establishing funds at the local level to support children who are at risk of child labor. (55) Child welfare officers were appointed in 219 local governments and children's funds were established in 195 local municipalities. (8) Child rights committees served more than 406,000 children. (68)
Helpline and Hotline Programs†	Child Helpline—1098 is an MWCSC- and Child Workers in Nepal-funded helpline. (7) Responds to calls about missing children, child abuse, child labor, child trafficking, and child sexual abuse in 18 locations in Nepal and Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. (10,70) NGO and government officials stated that the response time to investigate allegations of child labor reported through the helpline is slow. (8) National Center for Children at Risk—Hotline No. 104 is a hotline operated from Kathmandu, which is jointly run by the Central Child Welfare Board and Nepal Police. (17,47) These hotlines cover cases for 74 out of the total 77 districts in Nepal. (8) According to the Nepal Police, four to five children on average are removed from child labor every month in the informal sectors, such as transportation, domestic work, tea shops, and restaurants through the complaints received through Hotline No. 104. (41) The NCRC reported that the agency removed 69 children from potential hazardous work conditions through the hotlines and provided them with victim services and shelter. (22) The government installed two digital boards with information on human trafficking awareness in border crossing areas and other key locations. (55)

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
Support for Schools†	MoLESS program that supports schools for children ages 5 to 16 who are at risk of working in the worst forms of child labor. Provides scholarships to cover associated schooling costs for children outside the Kathmandu Valley to attend a local public school and works with local NGOs to verify that children are attending classes. (71) The government continues to provide lunches and sanitary napkins to encourage students to attend school to reduce the likelihood of their entry into child labor. (22) In fiscal year 2021–2022, the Ministry of Education provided scholarships worth \$300 (40,000 rupees) per child for 250 child laborers and children who experienced homelessness. (8)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Nepal.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (10, 11, 55, 72, 73)

The government of Nepal allocated \$35,380 (45.3 million rupees) for activities to eliminate child labor in fiscal year 2022–2023. Activities include contributions to the Child Labor Elimination Fund and the Rehabilitation Fund, awareness programs against child labor, and consultations with local governments to declare municipalities free of child labor. (8) Although Nepal has programs that target child labor, gaps exist in these social programs, including a lack of programs that support child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and children working in the production of bricks.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Nepal (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for entry into hazardous work to 18 years old.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive and include sectors in which there is evidence of child labor, including brickmaking, breaking stones, and weaving carpets.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the legal framework comprehensively and criminally prohibits the human trafficking of children without requiring proof of the use of force, fraud, or coercion.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including the production of drugs.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally penalizes the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the criminal and labor law provisions against child labor are meaningfully enforced against perpetrators, and cases are resolved through prosecution, where appropriate, rather than negotiations and minor fines.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the Ministry of Labor's budget is sufficient to adequately enforce child labor laws.	2016 – 2022
	Expand child labor enforcement through complaint based and routine targeted inspections, including unannounced inspections, to all sectors, including the informal sector and small factories that employ less than 10 workers.	2018 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 11 to 218 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 8.7 million people.	2010 – 2022
	Provide training to labor inspectors on laws related to child labor, including its worst forms, on an annual basis.	2019 – 2022
	Publish data on criminal law enforcement actions, including training for criminal investigators and the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and penalties imposed for child labor crimes.	2009 – 2022
	Create and utilize a centralized database to track and monitor cases of child labor, disaggregated by type of activity and gender, including labor court data related to child labor.	2009 – 2022
	Investigate, prosecute, and, where appropriate, convict and sentence perpetrators of bonded labor.	2022
	Ensure the government investigates and criminally prosecutes cases of human trafficking and bonded labor.	2022
Government Policies	Ensure that the implementation of services under the new federalist system, including a new policy framework to address child labor abuses, is carried out.	2018 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the types of work activities carried out by children, including in the construction sector, to inform social policies and programs.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that survivors calling the national helpline receive timely support and intervention.	2022
	Eliminate barriers to education for children with disabilities and refugee children and address barriers related to lack of sanitation facilities at schools, long distances to schools, fees associated with schooling, pressure to find work, migration to work outside of Nepal, and issues with drugs and alcohol.	2013 – 2022
	Create social programs that support all victims of commercial sexual exploitation and children working in the brick industry.	2018 – 2022

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In 2022, Nicaragua made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established the new National Strategic Plan for the Prevention, Care, Investigation, Persecution, and Sanction of Human Trafficking. However, children in Nicaragua are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Laws do not establish a clear compulsory education age, and the government lacks adequate services for human trafficking survivors, such as shelters. In addition, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies lack the financial and human resources necessary to fulfill their mandates. Furthermore, the government lacks a specific and consistent mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Nicaragua. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

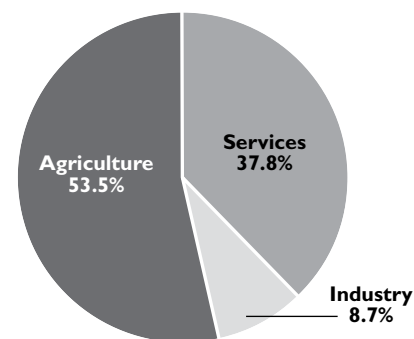
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	47.7 (342,076)
Attending School (%)	10 to 14	88.3
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	40.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Continua de Hogares (ECH), 2012. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting coffee, bananas, and tobacco† (3-6)
	Raising livestock† (7,8)
	Fishing,† including collecting shellfish† (8-11)
Industry	Construction† (7,8,11,12)
	Quarrying† of pumice and limestone, and mining† of gold (3,8-14)
	Production of gravel (crushed stones)† (15)
Services	Domestic work (7-11)
	Work in transportation† (7,8)
	Work in tourism and the hotel industry (7,9)
	Work in restaurants (9)
	Street work (7-10)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and use in the production of pornography (9,12,16-18)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, construction, and mining (12,18)
	Forced begging (12,13,19)
	Use in illicit activities, including in drug production and drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,11,12)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Information about the prevalence of child labor in Nicaragua is limited because the last known national survey on child labor was published in 2012. (7,20,21) Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a stalled economy, many Nicaraguans established informal family businesses, which are more likely to use child labor. (9) Reports also indicate that as a direct result of the pandemic, child labor increased in Nicaragua, with a visible increase of children working at traffic lights. Children in Nicaragua are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, particularly in Granada, Managua, the Caribbean Autonomous Regions, and San Juan del Sur. (13,22,23) Children from poor rural areas, those in the Caribbean Autonomous Regions, and migrants from the Northern Triangle countries are particularly vulnerable. (13,24) Children who lack identification documents, sometimes due to a lack of birth registration, may not have access to social services and are at an increased risk of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (25)




Research indicates that the government continues to impede the work of civil society organizations by threatening them with fines or closure if deemed in opposition to the government. (9) Over 3,300 national and international civil society organizations have been closed by the government since 2018, with approximately 3,100 of these closures happening in 2022 alone. (11,26-34) Among the organizations affected by the closures, there are many that provided social services to prevent child labor and aid to child labor survivors, as well as other services to children survivors of violence. In particular, NGOs associated with the Nicaraguan Coordinating Federation of NGOs that Work on Children and Adolescent Issues (CODENI) have been threatened by the regime and risk closure themselves. (11,27,30-33) As a result, numerous civil society organizations were forced to close or suspend their activities in the country in 2022, which may increase the vulnerability of children to exploitation. (11,34)

Education is free and compulsory in Nicaragua; however, the costs associated with school supplies and transportation make it difficult for some children, particularly those from poor backgrounds and rural areas, to attend school. (7,16) Another barrier facing children from rural areas is long distances and a lack of secure transportation. (9,11) There are also reports of poor preschool education, particularly among disadvantaged rural households, insufficient learning materials, as well as a lack of quality and limited school infrastructure. Only 50 percent of schools in the country provide basic drinking water. (35,36) School infrastructures are also very susceptible to damage or destruction during natural disasters. Children from indigenous groups and African descent face significant discrimination in accessing education. (35)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Nicaragua has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Nicaragua's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of a compulsory education age that equals the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Articles 130 and 131 of the Labor Code; Articles 2 and 73 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 84 of the Constitution (37-40)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 130, 133, and 135 of the Labor Code; Article 1 of Ministerial Agreement No. JCHG-08-06-10; Articles 2 and 74 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (37-39,41)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1 and 6 of Ministerial Agreement No. JCHG-08-06-10; Articles 133 and 135 of the Labor Code (37,41)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 40 of the Constitution; Articles 5, 6, and 61 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 16, 182, 182 <i>bis</i> , and 315 of the Penal Code (40,42,43)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Part III and Articles 3, 6, and 61 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 16, 182, and 182 <i>bis</i> of the Penal Code; Article 40 of the Constitution (40,42,43)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 6 and 61 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 175, 176, 178–180, 182, and 182 <i>bis</i> of the Penal Code; Articles 5 and 26 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (39,42,43)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 6 and 61 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 182, 182 <i>bis</i> , 349, 351, 352, 359, and 362 of the Penal Code (42,43)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Annex I of the Code on the Organization, Jurisdiction, and Social Welfare of the Military (44)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 509 of the Penal Code; Article 79 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 95 of the Constitution (39,40,42)
Compulsory Education Age	No	12‡	Article 121 of the Constitution; Articles 19 and 23 of the Education Law; Article 43 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (39,40,45)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 121 of the Constitution; Articles 8, 19, and 23 of the Education Law; Article 43 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (39,40,45)

* Country has no conscription (40)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (39,40,45)

Nicaraguan law is not clear regarding the age up to which education is compulsory. Article 121 of the Constitution states that primary school education is compulsory; however, it does not specify an age. (40) Under

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Articles 19 and 23 of the Education Law, education is compulsory only through the sixth grade, which it specifies is up to age 12 and the end of primary school. The Education Law defines secondary education as between the ages of 12 and 17. (45) Meanwhile, Article 43 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code states that both primary and secondary school education are compulsory. (39) If the compulsory education age is 12, children ages 12 to 14 may be vulnerable to child labor and its worst forms because they are not permitted to work but are also not required to be in school. However, if the compulsory education age is 17, the lower minimum age for work may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (39,40,45)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MITRAB)	Enforces labor laws and sets child labor policy priorities. Conducts labor inspections through its General Labor Inspectorate and conducts child labor inspections through its Child Labor Inspections Unit. (9,18) Conducts training on child labor issues and inspections. Maintains a mailbox in each of Nicaragua's 17 departments to receive complaints of child labor violations. (9,18)
Nicaraguan National Police	Address cases of child labor and human trafficking through the Police Intelligence Unit, which detects crimes, and the Special Crimes Unit, which investigates crimes. Maintains a hotline for reporting violations of children's rights. (9,18)
Prosecutor's Office	Prosecutes cases of child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. Contains 2 national-level and 35 department-level prosecutors who prosecute these and other crimes. (9,18)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Nicaragua took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MITRAB) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,310,000 (9)	\$1,295,677 (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	97 (9)	Unknown (11)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (37)	Yes (37)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (46)	Unknown (11)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (9)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	3 (46)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (9)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (9)	Unknown (11)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Unknown (11)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (9)	Unknown (11)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (47)	Yes (47)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Unknown (11)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (11)

Reports indicate that funding levels for the labor inspectorate are insufficient to address the scope of the child labor problem in the country. (11) The government has indicated that approximately 42 percent of MITRAB's overall budget goes to labor inspections. (9,46) Nicaragua has a large informal and rural workforce, and the Labor Inspectorate is unable to adequately cover the country's vulnerabilities to, and the magnitude of, labor violations. Moreover, most labor inspections are focused on the formal sector, which represents only an estimated 15

percent of the economy, instead of in the informal sector, which is where most child labor occurs. (8,11,16) Research also indicates that Nicaragua does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (48-51)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Nicaragua took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including deficient structures for investigation and prosecution of the worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (9)	Unknown (11)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (48)	Unknown (11)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (48)	Unknown (11)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (48)	Unknown (11)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (48)	Unknown (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (11)

As the government does not provide access to judicial proceedings, independent observers are unable to verify arrests, detentions, and convictions of individuals. (51) Research indicates that criminal law enforcement agencies lack effective investigation, prosecution, and prevention efforts. (52) In addition, government efforts related to the worst forms of child labor do not adequately address the scope of the problem, as there are very few, if any, human trafficking investigations, including in cases related to child exploitation, that lead to prosecutions, with very few victims being identified by the state. (52,53) Although the Ministry of the Family, Adolescence, and Childhood (MIFAN) also maintains a guide for assisting child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, the government has no formal procedures for the identification of human trafficking victims among high-risk populations, including children who are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, particularly in rural areas and the Caribbean Coast. (34,53) While there is a reciprocal referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services in the country, there is no information as to the extent it is used or the effectiveness of the mechanism. (9)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Social Welfare System (SNBS)	Coordinates efforts on child labor and ensures that government institutions protect the rights of children and provide social services to them as part of their mandate to assist the Nicaraguan population. Comprises various government ministries, including MITRAB; the Ministry of the Family, Adolescence, and Childhood (MIFAN); the Ministry of Education (MINED); the Ministry of Health (MINSAL); and the Ministry of Governance. (9) SNBS does not have a specific and consistent coordinating mechanism due to limited coordination among constituent ministries and a lack of financial resources dedicated to addressing child labor. (15) Research was unable to determine whether the SNBS Coordinating Body carried out activities to address child labor during the reporting period.

Reports indicate that the National Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (NCATIP) continues to not engage with local civil society, despite being required to do so by law. Local civil society organizations were also unable to corroborate increased NCATIP activity in the local working groups, and in general, the government did not coordinate with or fund NGOs. (9,11,13,16,17,22,24,53,54) A significant number of NGOs that provided services

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for survivors of human trafficking have been stripped of their legal status and had their property seized by the government. (34) Some civil organizations have reported a continued dismantling of once-active NCATIP regional committees and state that NCATIP has had no measurable impact since its creation. (24,51) NCATIP has still not announced or appointed a person to the position of Executive Secretariat, which is mandated by the Law Against Trafficking in Persons. (9,16)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Good Government Plan	Sets development goals for government ministries, including MITRAB, MINED, and MINSa. Prioritizes human trafficking investigations; aims to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation; and commits to training teachers by creating 1,000 primary school teaching positions and increasing access to education, including for indigenous and Afro-descendant children. (55) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement the Good Government Plan.
National Strategic Plan for the Prevention, Care, Investigation, Persecution, and Sanction of Human Trafficking (2023–2027) †	Launched in March 2022. Seeks to implement actions to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and sanction human trafficking, as well as to provide assistance and protection to survivors in a comprehensive manner. (56) As part of these efforts it will carry out awareness raising, trainings, and capacity-building activities. It will also seek to generate and improve coordination mechanisms between agencies to efficiently respond to complaints. (56)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the insufficient scope of their operations.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Love Program (<i>Programa Amor</i>) †	MIFAN program that supports vulnerable or impoverished children, including children involved in child labor such as street work. Provides educational assistance for children and vocational training for parents. (57) Promotes school attendance, house-to-house and school visits, and extra-curricular activities. (16) Overseen by Nicaragua's Vice President in coordination with MINED, MINSa, MITRAB, and the Ministry of Governance. (57) Allows MIFAN to carry out activities with other government institutions, civil society, and religious organizations, as well as with communities and families. (16) Its Love Program for the Smallest Ones includes children from birth to age 6. (57) Reports indicate this program was active in 2022, and continued to provide services to children. (58)
Educational Bridges (<i>Puentes Educativos</i>) †	MITRAB and MINED public-private partnership implemented by World Vision that provides education to children of coffee workers to prevent child labor during coffee harvests. (59) In 2022, it continued to provide services by providing day care and schooling to children of coffee workers while their parents worked in the field. (5)
School Supply and Meal Programs †	Aim to assist children in the country in an attempt to improve school attendance and completion rates. The Integral School Meal Program (<i>Merienda Escolar</i>) is a MIFAN and WFP initiative that provides children and adolescents with meals at school to address poverty and improve attendance. (60) Reports indicate the government continued to provide school meals through this program in 2022, by providing thousands of quintals of rice, beans, cereals, corn, and other foodstuff products to schools throughout the country. (61,62) National School Supply Program (<i>Paquetes Escolares Solidarios</i>) is a MINED program that distributes packages of school supplies to preschool, primary, and secondary school children in the poorest districts to increase attendance and completion rates. (63) In 2022, the government once again provided over 1 million school supply packages to students and 60,000 briefcases to teachers. (64)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Nicaragua.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,16,46)

The scope of Nicaragua's social programs is not sufficient to assist children who are subjected to child labor or engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation. (11,18) Although MIFAN coordinates services for child trafficking survivors, including by providing access to education, medical, and legal services, the country still lacks adequate services for human trafficking survivors, such as shelters and specialized services for males and those with disabilities. (19,46,53)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Nicaragua (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law is consistent and that the compulsory education age matches the minimum age for work.	2014 – 2022
Enforcement	Employ at least 215 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of approximately 3.2 million people, especially in rural areas and the informal sector.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that all criminal investigators receive training on child labor and its worst forms.	2019 – 2022
	Collect and publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of labor inspectors and whether they received training, the number of labor inspections conducted at worksites, the number of child labor violations found for which penalties were imposed and collected, whether routine inspections were conducted and targeted, and if unannounced inspections were conducted.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the Ministry of Labor has sufficient funding to enforce labor laws, including those related to child labor, and that resource needs are met.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement efforts are sufficient to address the scope of the problem and that agencies have the funding and resources necessary to carry out their duties.	2014 – 2022
	Establish an adequate mechanism for identifying human trafficking victims, particularly children, among high-risk populations.	2018 – 2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement information on efforts related to the worst forms of child labor to allow for the verification of the information.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Social Welfare System has a specific and consistent mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor, including with NGOs, is fully funded, and publicly report on these efforts.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons works with relevant local stakeholders to address human trafficking issues, and ensure that it establishes a person in the position of Executive Secretariat, as mandated by the Law Against Trafficking in Persons.	2015 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Good Government Plan policy and that data on these activities to address child labor are published during the reporting period.	2009 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish updated data on the prevalence of child labor in the country.	2018 – 2022
	Expand birth registration programs to ensure that children have the necessary documentation required for access to basic services.	2009 – 2022
	Remove barriers to education, such as transportation and the cost associated with school supplies, for all children, particularly those from poor backgrounds and rural areas; improve school infrastructure and access to learning materials.	2009 – 2022
	Implement social programs that address the full scope of the worst forms of child labor in the country, including commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2022
	Develop social services for human trafficking survivors, such as shelters and specialized services, and ensure that services are available throughout the country, especially in areas where children are most vulnerable.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that civil society organizations and NGOs working on child labor and children's issues are able to carry out their work freely and independently.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, Niger made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government created a new committee to combat forced begging and held a workshop to revise the draft National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor. However, children in Niger are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in hereditary slavery and mining, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks herding livestock. The minimum age for work does not meet international standards because it does not apply to children in informal work. In addition, the government made limited efforts to address the ongoing practice of *wahaya*, a form of child slavery that was upheld as illegal by a Nigerien court in 2019. Lastly, there are persistent gaps in labor law enforcement, including insufficient funding for labor inspectors to conduct inspections.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Niger.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	42.9 (2,516,191)
Attending School (%)	7 to 14	48.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	22.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		57.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2012. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of rice, fruits, nuts, and vegetables (3-5)
	Herding and caring for livestock, including cattle, sheep, goats, and fowl (5-7)
	Fishing, including river net casting (8)
Industry	Quarrying† and mining† for trona, salt, gypsum, and gold (3,7,9-12)
	Metal work† (13)
	Working in construction,† tanneries,† and slaughterhouses† (3,5,7,12,14)
	Brick making (12)
Services	Street work, including as market vendors, and begging† (3)
	Garbage scavenging (3)
	Domestic work (3,12,15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,7,9,12)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (7)
	Hereditary and caste-based slavery, including for cattle herding, agricultural work, domestic work, and sexual exploitation (3,7,9,12)
	Forced begging (7,9,16-18)
	Forced labor in domestic work and mining (7,9,12)
	Use in illicit activities, including trafficking drugs (7)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Children in Niger, especially boys and girls from the Arab, Djerma, Peulh, Tuareg, and Toubou ethnic minorities, continue to be exploited as slaves and endure slavery-like practices, particularly in the regions of Tahoua and Agadez. (3,14) Some children are born into slavery; others are born free but remain in a dependent status and are forced to work with their parents for their former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. (5,12,20,21) A particular form of slavery in Niger is the *wahaya* practice, in which men buy girls born into slavery, often between ages 9 and 14, as “fifth wives.” Even though Niger’s Supreme Court set a legal precedent by ruling *wahaya* to be illegal in 2019, the government has made limited efforts to inform the public of the court’s ruling. (3,7,8,22) Child slaves, including those involved in the practice of *wahaya*, are forced to work long hours as cattle herders, agricultural workers, or domestic workers, and are often sexually exploited. (12,23) As with those involved in hereditary slavery, the children of *wahaya* wives are considered slaves, and are passed from one owner to another as gifts or as part of dowries. (6,12,23) During the reporting period, children were also forcibly recruited and used as child soldiers by non-state armed groups. (7)




In Niger, some Koranic teachers known as *marabouts* subject their students, boys known as *talibés*, to manual labor or forced begging rather than providing them with a religious education. (3,7,9) Children in Niger participating in seasonal migration or migrant children from West Africa traveling to Algeria and Libya may also be subject to forced begging or commercial sexual exploitation. (16,18,24-26) In addition, Niger has a form of internal child trafficking called *confiage*, in which family members send their children to live with relatives or friends with promises of better educational or trade learning opportunities. However, some children are instead subjected to exploitation, including forced labor, sex trafficking, and domestic work. (7,12)

Although the Constitution guarantees free education, school fees are often required. A lack of school infrastructure and school materials, and the limited availability of teachers, especially in rural areas, impedes access to education, which may increase the vulnerability of children to child labor. (3,7) Due to insecurity, hundreds of schools were closed during the reporting period. (13)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Niger has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Niger’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections for children working in the informal economy.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Article 106 of the Labor Code (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 159 of Decree No. 2017-682 (28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 159–161 and 164–171 of Decree No. 2017-682; Article 181 of the Penal Code (28,29)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 14 of the Constitution; Article 4 and 107 of the Labor Code; Article 158 of Decree No. 2017-682; Article 270 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 10 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (27-31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 107 of the Labor Code; Article 158 of Decree No. 2017-682; Articles 2 and 10 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons; Article 16 of the Law 2015-36 on Illicit Traffic of Migrants (27,28,31,32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 107 of the Labor Code; Article 158 of Decree No. 2017-682; Articles 291 and 292 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 10 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (27-29,31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 107 of the Labor Code; Article 158 of Decree No. 2017-682; Article 181 of the Penal Code; Articles 10 and 16 of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (27-29,31)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 107 of the Labor Code (27)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 107 of the Labor Code (27)
Compulsory Education Age	No		Article 8 of Decree No. 2017-935; Article 2 of the Law on the Orientation of the Educational System (33,34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 23 of the Constitution; Article 8 of Decree No. 2017-935; Article 2 of the Law on the Orientation of the Educational System (30,33,34)

* Country has no conscription (35)

Although the Labor Code establishes age 14 as the minimum age for work, it does not apply to workers in the informal economy, which does not conform to international standards requiring all children to be protected under the law. (27,36) In addition, Article 2 of the Law on the Orientation of the Educational System in Niger guarantees education for all children ages 4 to 18, and Article 8 of Decree No. 2017-935 states that the government is required to promote access to compulsory education, particularly for young girls. However, Niger's law does not clearly articulate to which age groups the latter provision applies, thereby leaving some children at risk of not being covered and increasing the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (33,34)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment, Labor and Social Security (MELSS)	Enforces labor laws and investigates Labor Code infractions, including those on child and forced labor. Conducts awareness-raising programs to address child labor. (3,26,37)
National Civil Police Force Morals and Minors Brigade	Investigates criminal cases involving minors, including issues pertaining to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and hereditary slavery. Housed under the Ministry of Interior and Public Security. (3)
National Human Rights Commission	Receives complaints related to child labor, including its worst forms, and conducts investigations of human rights violations, including hereditary slavery. (3,37)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Niger took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Employment, Labor and Social Security (MELSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of adequate human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	\$90,000 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	60 (3)	60 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (13)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (3)	117 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Unknown (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (7)

The MELSS's number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Niger's workforce, which includes approximately 9.8 million workers. (3,7,14) While the government reported having 60 labor inspectors, only 10 of them were located in the field carrying out inspections. (7) In addition, the MELSS does not have the necessary funds or resources to be able to carry out inspections in all regions, especially in the informal sector and in remote locations where most child labor occurs. Moreover, although the government did not provide the number of child labor cases found in 2022, the MELSS noted that children are only removed from child labor situations in extreme cases of exploitation, such as child trafficking or forced labor. (3,38)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Niger took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (3)	No (7)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (7)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	Unknown (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (7)

Research found that inadequate resources, including insufficient personnel, funding, and training, hamper the capacity of criminal law enforcement authorities to coordinate and enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,39,40) The National Agency to Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migrant Transport maintains a hotline to report human trafficking crimes, but the number of calls received by the hotline that involve child trafficking is unknown. Even though the Nigerien Supreme Court ruled the practice of *wahaya* to be illegal in 2019, reinforcing the 2003 Penal Code that prohibits this practice, research found enforcement to

be negligible and that it remains common practice in some parts of the country. (13,29) Furthermore, many victims do not come forward or file complaints against their former masters due to dependency on their former masters and a lack of reintegration services. (5,11)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee to Combat Child and Forced Labor	Led by MELSS, includes 17 Nigerien ministries and agencies with the purpose of finalizing the next phase of Niger's National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor. (3,41) Also intends to develop a new hazardous work list. (3,7,41) During the reporting period, the Committee held a workshop to revise the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor. (7)

During the reporting period, Niger created an interministerial committee to combat forced begging, chaired by the Prime Minister's Deputy Chief of Staff. (13,50)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2019–2023)	Aims to enhance the legal framework to prevent human trafficking, adequately implement the laws, and provide effective protection and care for victims, including children. Led by the National Agency to Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migrant Transport. (11,51,52) While it was active during the reporting period, research was unable to determine what activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons during the reporting period. (13)
National Social Protection Strategy	Aims to improve the quality of, and access to, basic education and health services; includes strategies to address child labor. Overseen by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection. (53) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Social Protection Strategy during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (42)

Although Niger has adopted the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the problem in all sectors, including agriculture, herding, mining, and caste-based servitude.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Centers for the Prevention, Protection, and Promotion of Persons†	Government program replacing the Judicial and Preventive Education Services, in collaboration with UNICEF, to provide food, shelter, education, and vocational training to street children, many of whom are survivors of child labor. (7,15,47) In 2022, the program continued but research could not find information on its activities or how many of the 54 existing centers continue to be operational.
UNICEF Country Program (2019–2022)	UNICEF-funded program that supported the government's efforts to improve children's education, birth registration rates, and social inclusion, and to strengthen child protection programs, including for children of refugees in the Diffa region. (57–59) The UNICEF Country Program ended in 2022. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Niger.

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Although Niger has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the problem, especially in agriculture, herding, mining, and caste-based servitude. Niger also lacks a specific program to assist children exploited by religious instructors. (3,7,9,39) In addition, the resources and facilities available to social services agencies remain inadequate. (3,7,9,39)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Niger (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's minimum age for work provisions and protections apply to self-employed children and those in unpaid or non-contractual work.	2015 – 2022
	Establish a compulsory education age equal to the minimum age for work of 14 years.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that inspections and enforcement efforts take place in the informal sector, and in remote locations, where most child labor occurs.	2014 – 2022
	Publish complete information and data on the government's enforcement of child labor laws, including the number of worksite inspections conducted, violations found, and penalties imposed and collected.	2012 – 2022
	Increase resources, including funding and training available to enforcement agencies, increase the number of labor inspectors from 60 to 246 to ensure adequate coverage of a labor force of approximately 9.8 million people, and increase the number of criminal investigators to provide adequate inspection coverage.	2009 – 2022
	Disaggregate complaints made to the National Agency to Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migrant Transport's hotline so that the number of complaints related to children is known.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that all survivors of the worst forms of child labor are removed from exploitative situations as appropriate.	2010 – 2022
	Publish complete information on the number of criminal investigations, prosecutions, and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Adequately enforce the Nigerien Supreme Court's ruling banning the practice of <i>wahaya</i> .	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that survivors of slavery are returned to their families, and have access to reintegration services, as appropriate, including educational opportunities and counseling.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt and implement a national action plan to address child labor, including in hereditary slavery, mining, and agriculture.	2009 – 2022
	Publish information about efforts to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the National Social Protection Strategy on an annual basis.	2016 – 2022
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including girls, refugees, internally displaced children, and children in rural communities, by increasing school infrastructure, increasing the number of teachers, removing school fees, and providing more school supplies.	2013 – 2022
	Expand the scope of programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture, herding, mining, and caste-based servitude.	2009 – 2022
	Implement a program to target and assist children exploited by religious instructors.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that government social services providers have sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care to all children withdrawn from forced labor and publish information on these activities.	2015 – 2022

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In 2022, Nigeria made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Five additional Nigerian Governors signed the Child Rights Act, which provides free and compulsory education for children and prohibits the use of children in illicit activities and by non-state armed groups. The government also hired over 180 labor inspectors and increased inspections from 10,526 in 2021 to 17,026 in 2022. In addition, the government established 11 community child labor monitoring committees, which oversee child labor projects and outreach efforts at the local level. Finally, the government adopted a new national action plan on human trafficking and conducted a national child labor survey in order to better inform their child labor policies. However, children in Nigeria are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and use in armed conflict, as well as quarrying granite and artisanal mining. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, protections related to the minimum age for work do not apply to children who are self-employed or working in the informal economy. In addition, the state of Kano does not prohibit the use of children in illicit activities.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Nigeria. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	15 (6,798,456)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	78
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	10.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from General Household Survey (GHS), 2019. (2)

These data are not comparable with data presented in last year's report due to changes in survey source, survey questionnaire, or age range surveyed.

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of coffee, cotton, tea, manioc/cassava, cocoa, rice, and tobacco (3-6)
	Fishing, activities unknown (7)
	Herding livestock (4,6,8,9)
Industry	Mining and quarrying of granite and gravel (3,6,8,9)
	Artisanal gold mining (4,6,9,10)
	Harvesting sand (10)
	Construction, including making bricks and carrying construction materials (3,4,6,8,9)
Services	Domestic work (3,4,8,9,11,12)
	Collecting money on public buses, washing cars, and automotive repair (4,8,9,11)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and scavenging (3,4,8,9,11)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,8,12,13)
	Forced labor in begging; domestic work; street vending; textile manufacturing; mining and quarrying gravel, granite, and artisanal gold; and agriculture, including in cocoa (4,9,12,13)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict and in non-conflict support roles, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,9)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Nigeria continues to be a source, transit, and destination country for forced labor and sex trafficking of both adults and children. Trafficked Nigerians are recruited from primarily rural areas within the country, with women and girls recruited for domestic work and sex trafficking while boys are recruited for street vending, domestic work, mining, agriculture, and begging. (6,8) Benin City, the capital of Edo State, continues to be a major human trafficking hub in Africa, but increased enforcement efforts may have caused some human trafficking rings to shift their focus to other areas of southern Nigeria. (14) Rapid population growth in Nigeria is also driving the informal education sector, with several million boys in the north going to Quranic schools known as *Almajiri*. The government does not officially recognize these schools, and students attending *Almajiri* schools are officially considered to be out of school. (8) The *Almajiri* system includes a component of child labor, with some teachers tasking older children with menial jobs and other children forced into begging. (8,9,15) Despite notable military advances and proclamations of Boko Haram’s defeat by government forces, the group remained a security threat, with escalating attacks by both Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa in Nigeria’s northeastern regions. These attacks have contributed to the displacement of more than 2 million people, of which 56 percent were children. (6,16-18)




UNICEF reported that as of January 2022, at least 10.5 million children, or one-third of all Nigerian children, are out of school in Nigeria, making it the highest out-of-school rate in the world. Northeastern and northwestern states have female primary net attendance rates of 47.7 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively. (8,19) The widespread increase in kidnappings, killings, village raids, and cattle-rustling throughout the Northwest and North Central regions led by organized criminal groups has also contributed to the intermittent closure of schools throughout the region, with these challenges being more acute in rural areas. (8,19) Reports also suggest that children lacking birth certificates or other formal documentation have been denied access to public schools. Although it is unclear how widespread this issue is, research suggests that it is most common in the northeastern region and rural areas. (9)

Although free and compulsory education is federally mandated by the Education Act, little enforcement of compulsory education laws occurs at the state level. School fees are often charged in practice, and the cost of materials can be prohibitive for families. (4,9) When families experience economic hardship, the enrollment of boys is typically prioritized over the enrollment of girls. Other barriers to education include a lack of trained teachers, sexual harassment, inadequate sanitation facilities, poor infrastructure, and fear of abduction or attack by Boko Haram while at school, particularly for girls in the northeastern part of the country. (4,8,11,17,20,21)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Nigeria has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Nigeria's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including setting the minimum age for work at 12 years old.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	12	Section 59(1) and 91 of the Labor Act; Sections 28, 29, and 277 of the Child's Right Act (22,23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 59 (5) and (6) of the Labor Act; Sections 28, 29, and 277 of the Child's Right Act; Sections 23 and 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015 (22-24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Sections 59–61 and 91 of the Labor Act; Section 28 of the Child's Right Act; (22,23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 13, 21–25, and 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015; Sections 28, 30, and 277 of the Child's Right Act; Article 34 of the Constitution (23-25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 13, 16, 17, 21–25, and 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015; Sections 30, 33, and 277 of the Child's Right Act (23,24)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 13–17 and 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015; Section 23 of the Cybercrimes Act; Sections 30, 32, and 277 of the Child's Right Act (23-26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Sections 25, 26, 30, and 277 of the Child's Right Act (23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 28 of the Armed Forces Act; Sections 34 and 277 of the Child's Right Act (23,27)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Section 19 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (24)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Sections 2 and 15 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child's Right Act (23,28)
Free Public Education	Yes		Sections 2 and 3 of the Education Act; Section 15 of the Child's Right Act (23,28)

* Country has no conscription (27)

In 2022, five additional Nigerian Governors signed the Child Rights Act (CRA), which provides free and compulsory education for children and prohibits the use of children in illicit activities and by non-state armed groups. Each state must adopt and implement the act in its territory for the CRA to become law. (23,29,30)

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However, only 35 of the 36 states have adopted and implemented the CRA, leaving the state of Kano in northern Nigeria with a legal statute that does not meet international standards for the prohibition against the use of children in illicit activities. (6,23,26,29,31) Furthermore, under the CRA, certain provisions of the labor act that are not in compliance with international standard may remain in force. This includes Section 59, which sets the minimum age for employment at age 12 in contradiction to the CRA, which only permits children under age 18 to engage in light work for family members. (22,23) The minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (22,23,28)

The Labor Act also permits children of any age to do light work in agriculture and domestic work if they are working with a family member, which does not meet international standards. Furthermore, the minimum age protections in the Labor Act do not apply to children who are self-employed or working in the informal economy. (22,32) Lastly, children are not excluded from the Terrorism Prevention Act's penalty of life imprisonment for assisting in acts of terrorism and are implicitly included as people in Section 19 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act. (24,33)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Labor Inspectorate, Ministry of Labor and Employment (MLE)	Deploys labor inspectors across 36 state labor offices and the federal capital territory to enforce federal child labor laws. In 2022, carried out activities to commemorate the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor. (4,34-36)
Anti-Trafficking Agencies	Enforces laws against human trafficking and exploitative labor. Coordinates with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development and state governments to provide child labor survivors with social services and reunite trafficked children with their families. (4,12,34) Operates hotlines for survivors in Abuja and each zonal command center. Includes an Investigation and Security Unit tasked with the prevention and detection of human trafficking cases. (14,20,37)
Nigeria Police	Enforces all laws prohibiting forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Collaborates with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking (NAPTIP) to address human trafficking issues. (4)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Nigeria took action to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Employment that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$515,375 (8)	\$859,771 (37)
Number of Labor Inspectors	1,402 (8)	1,586 (37)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	10,526 (8)	17,026 (37)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	3,234 (8)	4,088 (38)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (39)	2 (37)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (39)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Unknown

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (8)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (6)

Enforcement of child labor laws was negatively impacted by a lack of resources for inspections, including office facilities, transportation, fuel, and other necessities to carry out inspections. While a reciprocal referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services exists, research did not find mechanisms to enforce existing protections for children in the informal sector. (8,9,40,41) Research also indicates that Nigeria does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (42)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Nigeria took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the allocation of resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	N/A (8)	Yes (43)
Number of Investigations	6 (39)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	6 (39)	0 (38)
Number of Convictions	0 (39)	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	0 (39)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (8)

While criminal law enforcement information was provided, the information was not disaggregated by age. (43) In addition, research suggests that criminal enforcement agencies are underfunded and lack the necessary resources and vehicles to access remote areas of the country for inspections. (6)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinates efforts to address child labor. Led by MLE and comprises representatives from seven governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, NGOs, ILO, and UNICEF. (4,9) Members are charged with leveraging resources for project implementation from their institutions and identifying synergies with other existing programs. (4,9) During the reporting period, the government established 11 Community Child Labor Monitoring Committees, which oversee child labor projects and outreach efforts. (6)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Nigeria

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
NAPTIP National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria (2022–2026)†	During the reporting period, the government adopted the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria for 2022–2026 and provided it with a \$33 million budget. Provides a framework for mobilizing the action plan and all stakeholders involved in addressing human trafficking, with an emphasis on enforcement, prosecution, and provision of services to survivors. (6,9,44,45) During the reporting period, 12 action plan protection officers were trained and appointed to 6 areas throughout the country. The purpose of these officers is to assist survivors and coordinate the activities of the police forces to address human trafficking issues. (6,8,9,44,46) In addition, the action plan created and adopted a Disability Inclusion Plan in 2022, which includes procedures for an all-encompassing service delivery for survivors of human trafficking who may have a disability. (43)
National Social Behavioral Change Communication Strategy for Elimination of Child Labor in Nigeria (2020–2023)	Addresses child labor at the household and community levels through awareness-raising activities. (9) Research was unable to determine whether any actions were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism	Designed to end the recruitment and use of children by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Aims to promote the protection of children's rights, ensures that suspects under age 18 are treated in accordance with international law, and provides for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration for children previously associated with CJTF. (47) The UN and CJTF, with the support of the government, continued to reintegrate children during the reporting period. (45) Since the signing of the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, the UN has reported nearly no use of children by CJTF. (9,30,45)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
NAPTIP Shelters for Human Trafficking Victims†	Government-funded program that operates 10 shelters in Nigeria, capable of housing up to 315 trafficking survivors. Shelters provide legal, medical, and psychological services, as well as vocational training and business management skills, along with referring survivors to NGOs for additional care. (12,13,15) However, research found concerns regarding the conditions in shelters housing human trafficking survivors. These conditions include poor housing facilities, a lack of food, and insufficient stipends, along with reports of survivors being held against their will for extended periods at shelters run by NAPTIP. (41,48) During the reporting period, a new 28-bed shelter was developed while another shelter was renovated. In addition, NAPTIP hosted two co-mentoring sessions for survivors of human trafficking so that the government could provide a platform for survivors to engage with each other and discuss with government officials how to best support them. (44)
Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Supply Chains in Africa (ACCEL Africa) (2018–2022)	ILO-sponsored regional project aimed at eliminating child labor in supply chains, with particular focus on those involved in the production of cocoa, coffee, cotton, gold, and tea. Collaborated with global supply chain actors working in Africa on public policy, good governance, empowerment, representation, partnership, and knowledge sharing. (5,50) During the reporting period, the ACCEL AFRICA project sponsored a regional conference that brought together 14 African countries to discuss best practices for eliminating child labor. (6,50)
World Bank-Funded Programs	Projects aimed to improve access to education. Include: National Social Safety Nets Project (2016–2022), a \$50 million project that aimed to provide primary school lunches and offered conditional cash transfers based on children's enrollment; and the Better Education Service Delivery for All (2017–2022), a \$611 million project that aimed to increase access to education for out-of-school youth and improve literacy. (51–54) In 2022, the National Social Safety Nets Project enrolled participants in all 36 states across the country and delivered cash transfers to 2.7 million households. (54) Since its inception, the Better Education Service Delivery for All project has helped reduce the number of out-of-school children by 924,590, of which 633,772 were girls. (53,55)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Nigeria.

During the reporting period, the government conducted a national child labor survey that helped improve knowledge and awareness surrounding child labor. (6,56) However, research found no evidence of programs to address all relevant worst forms of child labor, including the use of children in armed conflict, quarrying granite, artisanal mining, and commercial sexual exploitation. (9)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Nigeria (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 12 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that national legislation on the minimum age for work is consistent so that all children are protected, including those in the informal sector and who are self-employed.	2012 – 2022
	Harmonize the Child's Right Act and the Labor Act to ensure that their legal provisions do not contradict each other, including provisions on minimum age for work and light work.	2022
	Ensure that using, procuring, and offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs are criminally prohibited in all states.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that provisions related to light work conform to international standards by putting restrictions on domestic and agricultural work.	2009 – 2022
	Amend the Terrorism Prevention Act to prohibit the punishment of children for their association with armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of inspectors from 1,402 to 4,885 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors and enforcement agencies receive sufficient resources, including funding, resources for inspections, office facilities, transportation, fuel, and other necessities, to enforce child labor laws.	2016 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to enforce existing protections for children working in the informal sector.	2009 – 2022
	Publish information on child labor law enforcement, including whether penalties were imposed and collected for child labor violations and whether targeted routine inspections were conducted.	2020 – 2022
	Publish disaggregated information on criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators, number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Steering Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor is active and able to carry out their mandates as intended.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement government policies and that data on these activities are published during the reporting period, specifically the National Social Behavioral Change Communication Strategy for Elimination of Child Labor in Nigeria (2020–2023).	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that all states adopt programs to offer free education and expand existing programs that provide funds to vulnerable children, especially girls, to cover school fees and the cost of materials.	2014 – 2022
	Establish a robust mechanism to ensure that children are provided birth documentation so they are able to attend school.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that there is an adequate number of trained teachers and provide sufficient educational infrastructure for children, particularly girls, to access schools.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that there are proper protection protocols in place to keep schools safe, including from acts of terrorism and sexual violence.	2022
	Ensure that the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters and related agencies provide appropriate facilities and resources, including livable stipends and adequate housing, to survivors, and that survivors are not held against their will in shelters.	2019 – 2022
	Establish programs that prevent and remove children from all relevant worst forms of child labor, including armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, and gold mining.	2009 – 2022

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Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in Niue, in 2022, the government made minimal advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The government partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund to launch the Pacific Islands Inclusive Educational Review to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, have access to quality education. However, the government has not established adequate legal protections to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The law does not criminally prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution; the production of pornography, or pornographic performances, or the use of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, Niue has not established a minimum age for work and lacks a law that prohibits hazardous occupations and activities for children.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides one key indicator on children's education in Niue.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Primary Completion Rate (%)		130.8







Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

In 2022, the Government of Niue, in partnership with UNICEF, conducted a survey on the state of inclusive education. (2) The Pacific Region Inclusive Education Review, chaired by Niue's Minister for Social Services, found that handwashing and sanitation facilities are available at all schools, but menstrual hygiene management facilities are only accessible at about half of schools. (3)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Niue is self-governing in free association with New Zealand. (4,5) Since 1988, no treaty signed, ratified, accepted, approved, or acceded to by New Zealand extends to Niue, unless it was done expressly on behalf of Niue. (4) Niue has ratified one key international convention concerning child labor (Table 2).

Table 2. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 3). However, gaps exist in Niue's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to criminalize using children in illicit activities.

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Table 3. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No		Article 24 of the Niue Public Service Regulations (6)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 3 and 37 of the Terrorism Suppression and Transnational Crimes Act (7)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 33 of the Government of New Zealand's Defense Act (8)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 2 and 24 of the Education Act (9)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 19 of the Education Act (9)

* Country has no conscription (10)

† Country has no standing military (8)

New Zealand is responsible for the defense of the territory at Niue's request; therefore, Niue has no standing military or conscription. (8, 11) However, although there are no armed forces in Niue, the law does not criminally prohibit non-state armed groups from recruiting children under age 18. (12) Additionally, while Niue's Public Service Regulations prohibit the permanent employment in public service of any person under age 18, a minimum age for work in the private sector has not been established. (6, 12) Niue has not determined the minimum age for hazardous work nor the types of work that are hazardous for children. (4) The government also does not prohibit slavery or slavery-like practices such as forced labor. Niue's human trafficking provision does not clearly criminalize domestic trafficking or the trafficking of children in the absence of force, fraud, or coercion. (7) In addition, the government does not criminalize the use, procuring, or offering of children for prostitution, pornography, or pornographic performances. Niue has also not criminalized the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. (12)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the Government of Niue has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Niue Police Department	Enforces all laws, including those related to child labor, on behalf of the Government of Niue. Niue's Department for Community Affairs handles case intake and referral of children's matters to the Niue Police Department, including allegations of child labor. (4)
Department of Justice	Investigates crimes, including cases involving the worst forms of child labor. (12)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor. However, the Government of Niue has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Coordinating Committee	Coordinates the implementation of the UN CRC, monitoring and implementing child protection policies at the national level. (4) Research was unable to determine whether the National Coordinating Committee was active during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor. However, the Government of Niue has established a policy related to child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	The United Nations Pacific Strategy was a multi-national strategic framework program comprising 14 South Pacific nations. The strategy aimed to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. (13) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the strategy during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in Niue (Table 7).

Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify ILO Convention 182, the convention concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children.	2021 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2021 – 2022
	Establish a minimum age for work of at least age 16 that equals the compulsory education age.	2013 – 2022
	Establish age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work and identify hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit forced labor, including debt bondage and slavery.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of a child for prostitution, the production of pornography, and pornographic performances.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the trafficking of children domestically and internationally for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, and do not require that the use of force, fraud, or coercion be established for the crime of human trafficking.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2013 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the forced or compulsory recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure the National Coordinating Committee is active and has the resources necessary to implement child protection policies at the national level and implement the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.	2020 – 2022

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Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy and that data on these activities are published during the reporting period.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that all schools have menstrual hygiene management facilities that are safe and accessible to all female students.	2022

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Although research found that no child labor exists on Norfolk Island, in 2022, the government made moderate advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the Government of Australia ratified the International Labor Organization Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention of 1930. In June 2023, the government ratified the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), which will enter into force on June 13, 2024. Additionally, the Government of Norfolk Island began transitioning its states' services from New South Wales to Queensland, which is expected to be fully complete by December 31, 2026. However, the government has not established laws that sufficiently protect children from commercial sexual exploitation because the use of a child for prostitution is not prohibited.




I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that child labor exists on Norfolk Island. (1)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Norfolk Island is non-self-governing and is included as part of the territory of the Australian Commonwealth. (2,3) Under the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 (Cth), all laws of the Commonwealth are applicable to Norfolk Island as if it were a part of mainland Australia. (4) The following Conventions have been extended to Norfolk Island (Table 1).

Table 1. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

In April 2022, Australia ratified the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention 1930 (No. 29). (5) Australia also ratified the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) in June 2023, and the convention will enter into force on June 13, 2024. (6)

Norfolk Island is subject to the laws and regulations related to child labor of the Commonwealth of Australia and some of the laws and regulations related to child labor of the state of Queensland. Some laws specific to Norfolk Island also remain in force. (1,7) However, gaps exist in Norfolk Island's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for light work (Table 2).

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 24 of the Employment Act 1988 (NI) (8)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 81 and 89 (2) (d) of the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Qld) (NI) (9,10)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Chapter 4 of the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Qld) (NI) (9,10)

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Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 270.6 and 270.7 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth); Sections 270.6, 270.7, and 271.9 of the Crimes Legislation Amendment Act 2013 (Cth) (11,12)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Division 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) (11)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995, Section 122 of the Criminal Code 2007 (NI) (11,13)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Divisions 309 and 310 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth); Sections 303–305 of the Criminal Code 2007 (NI) (11,13)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Canberra Act 2600 (14)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Canberra Act 2600 (14)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Sections 268.68 and 268.88 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) (11)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 4 and 9 of the Education Act 2006 (Qld) (15)
Free Public Education	No		Section 51 of the Education Act 2006 (Qld) (15)

* Country has no conscription (14)

The Australian Government and the Queensland Government signed an Intergovernmental Agreement to support the provision of state services to Norfolk Island after the previous arrangements with the New South Wales Government ended on December 31, 2021. (16) In 2022, the Government of Norfolk Island started to transition its states' services from New South Wales to Queensland, which is expected to fully complete by December 31, 2026. (7) Only specific Queensland legislation is in force during this transition, including the Norfolk Island Applied Laws and Service Delivery (Queensland) Ordinance 2021, the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld), and the Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 (Qld). (7) Although Norfolk Island's Criminal Code 2007 and the Commonwealth Criminal Code prohibits the offering and procuring of a child for sex, the law does not prohibit the use a child for prostitution. (11,13) Additionally, the Employment Act 1988 (NI) does not set a minimum age for light work or specify activities in which light work may be permitted, which is not in compliance with international standards. (8) However, local authorities have reported that no children under age 15 are currently employed on Norfolk Island. (1) Norfolk Island also does not meet the international standard for free public education because under the newly applicable Queensland Education Act, 2006, free education is only available to Australian citizens, permanent residents, or children of citizens of permanent residents. Fees may be charged to attend school for people outside those categories. (15) Lastly, although the minimum age for work, 15, is lower than the compulsory education age, 16, a guardian of school age children must not allow the child to be employed during the time the child is required to attend school. (10,15)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the Government of Australia has established mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, which apply to Norfolk Island. Norfolk Island also has its own institutional mechanisms to enforce labor laws and regulations on child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Norfolk Island Labor Inspectors	Inspect places of employment for violations. Authorized to issue stop-work orders when violations are found, including child labor violations. (1,8)
Child Welfare Officers	Enforce laws prohibiting commercial sexual exploitation of children. Provide outreach and establish community programs to raise awareness about commercial sexual exploitation of children. (17)
Australian Federal Police	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (1,18) Oversee the Child Protection Operations Team, which coordinates and investigates online and multi-jurisdictional child sexual exploitation issues, including child pornography; and the Human Trafficking Teams, which investigate human trafficking for the purposes of transnational sexual and labor exploitation. (19,20)

Labor Law Enforcement

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for labor law enforcement actions to address child labor.

Criminal Law Enforcement

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for criminal law enforcement actions to address child labor.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for mechanisms to coordinate efforts to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Inter-Departmental Committee on Human Trafficking and Slavery	Deals with child labor law enforcement and policy, including the worst forms of child labor, from a counter-trafficking perspective. (1) Comprises 11 government agencies, including the Australian Federal Police, Department of Employment, and Department of Foreign Affairs, and is chaired by the Department of Home Affairs. (10,21) The Committee meets at least twice a year, including once at the ministerial level, and includes an Operational Working Group subcommittee that meets monthly and refers emerging policy issues for consideration. (1,22) In 2022, the Committee took multiple steps to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery, including extensive consultations with countries, businesses, and civil society groups. (23)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established a policy related to child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2020–2025	Sets five strategic priorities for addressing modern slavery, which the National Action Plan defines as trafficking in persons, slavery, slavery-like practices, and the worst forms of child labor. Priorities include: (1) prevention; (2) disruption, investigation, and prosecution; (3) support and protection for victims; (4) partnerships; and (5) research. (1,24) In December 2022, the Australian Attorney General convened the fourteenth Ministerial Meeting of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, the government's key mechanism for consulting with civil society and industry stakeholders on modern slavery issues. (1)

In 2022, the Government of Australia issued its annual report detailing the previous year's activities related to implementation of the Modern Slavery Act, which requires businesses and organizations with an annual turnover of \$70 million (AUD 100 million) or more to report on efforts made to reduce the risk of modern slavery, including the worst forms of child labor, in their supply chains. (1,25)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor. However, the Government of Australia has established social programs that included the goal of preventing child labor. (Table 6)

Table 6. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Cash Assistance Programs	Child Care Subsidy Program provides support for the care of children ages 13 or younger using an approved childcare service, and the Parenting Program provides an income support payment for the principal caretakers of a child under age 8. (1)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor on Norfolk Island (Table 7).

Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Establish a minimum age of 13 for light work and specify the activities in which light work may be undertaken by children.	2020 – 2022
	Establish free education by law for all children on Norfolk Island, including those who are not citizens, permanent residents, nor children of permanent residents.	2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child for prostitution in line with international standards.	2022

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In 2022, North Macedonia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Parliament of North Macedonia adopted the new Law on Compensation of Victims of Violent Crime which provides financial, medical, and psychosocial support for victims of crimes, including children. Additionally, in 2022 investigators and prosecutors from the Ministry of the Interior received trainings related to child labor and juvenile justice from the Academy for Judges and Prosecutors. However, children in North Macedonia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced begging. Additionally, the law's minimum age protections do not apply to children who are self-employed or working outside formal employment relationships.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in North Macedonia. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	18.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	20.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		93.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, [†] including in production of tobacco (4)
Services	Street work, including vending small items, cleaning vehicle windshields, scavenging, and begging (4,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5-7)
	Forced begging (4,7,9,10)
	Forced domestic work (3,6,7)
	Forced labor as wait staff and dancers in restaurants, bars, and nightclubs (4,8,11)

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

[†] Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

Most children involved in child labor in North Macedonia engage in street work, with the majority from the Roma, Balkan Egyptian, and Ashkali ethnicities. (3,4,6,9) Child trafficking victims in North Macedonia are usually girls, between the ages of 12 and 18, who have been subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. (6,10-12) Roma girls are also victims of trafficking for forced marriages in which they are subjected to sexual and labor exploitation. (5,8,9,13,14) Migrant children from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, and other states continue to transit through the country and are vulnerable to human trafficking for labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (8,15,16)

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The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP), schools, and civil society organizations offer assistance to Roma children who have difficulty accessing education due to a lack of birth registration and identity cards, which are required for attending school in North Macedonia. (4,10) However, the government continues to face challenges in meeting the educational needs of Roma children due to an ongoing shortage of qualified teachers who can provide instruction in Romani. (14,17)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

North Macedonia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in North Macedonia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections for children who are self-employed or working outside formal employment relationships.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 42 of the Constitution; Sections 63, 66, and 67 of the Labor Relations Act (18,19)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 265 and Sections 63, 66, and 67 of the Labor Relations Act (23)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Rulebook on the Minimum Occupational Safety and Health Requirements for Young Workers (24)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 11 of the Constitution; Articles 418(c) and 418(d) of the Criminal Code (22,25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 418(c) and 418(d) of the Criminal Code (25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 190–193b of the Criminal Code (25)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 201(4) of the Criminal Code; Article 12(3) of the Law on Child Protection (21,22)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 62 of the Law on Defense (27)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 62 of the Law on Defense (27)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 122, 322a, and 404 of the Criminal Code (25)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 4, 5, 47, and 172 of the Law on Primary Education; Article 3 of the Law on Secondary Education (28,29)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 44 of the Constitution (22)

* Country has no conscription (27)

In 2022, the Parliament of North Macedonia adopted the Law on Compensation of Victims of Violent Crime, which contains provisions to support child victims of trafficking. In addition to monetary compensation, individuals covered under the terms of the new law are also provided with access to medical support and additional counseling. (26,27) However, the minimum age for work does not comply with international standards because the law's minimum age protections do not apply to children who are self-employed or working outside formal employment relationships. (10,17,19) Because the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may also be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (21,22,28)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP)	Collaborates with the police and the Ombudsman's Office to conduct investigations and identify children living and working on the streets, and monitors cases of forced child labor through the Department of Social Inclusion. (3) Refers children to 30 Centers for Social Work throughout the country, which serve to counsel, educate, shelter, and assist children in need and victims of trafficking in persons. (3,27)
State Labor Inspectorate	Enforces labor law in the formal sector, including child labor laws, by conducting at least 60 targeted and complaint-based inspections per month. Receives complaints of child labor, can assess fines at any point of the inspection, and refers cases to the Public Prosecutor. (3,19,30)
Ministry of the Interior (MOI)	Enforces laws related to hazardous child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation through its special police unit for organized crime, corruption, and human trafficking. (3,22,27)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in North Macedonia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the State Labor Inspectorate that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of a central database for tracking labor investigations.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2,430,000 (5)	\$2,510,000 (34)
Number of Labor Inspectors	130 (5)	127 (34)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (23)	Yes (31-33)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (34)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	22,986 (5)	21,032 (34)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (5)	0 (34)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (5)	N/A (34)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (5)	N/A (34)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (34)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (34)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23)	Yes (32,33)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (34)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (34)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (34)

The Labor Inspectorate has an annual plan that determines the number of worksite inspections to be conducted during the calendar year. Unannounced inspections in all sectors are permitted, including on legally registered private farms. (11,28) Inspectors can also inspect private homes and farms with a valid warrant. (9) The MLSP

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lacks a central database to track labor investigations; however, inspection results are disseminated throughout relevant departments within the MLSP. (12)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in North Macedonia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inadequate investigation planning.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (3)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	15 (5)	11 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	5 (5)	13 (4)
Number of Convictions	1 (5)	17 (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (5)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (4)

In North Macedonia, legal requirements mandate that public prosecutors receive a 24-month general training, which includes the application of international legal standards. (12) Police investigators normally receive initial training, in addition to training when legislation changes. (34) North Macedonia's National Referral Mechanism enables law enforcement authorities to refer children found to be involved in the worst forms of child labor to social services, including those related to the protection, care, rehabilitation, and eventual reintegration of minor victims. (9,10) In 2022, the Academy for Judges and Prosecutors hosted trainings for investigators and prosecutors on how to properly identify child victims of sexual exploitation, providing alternative justice for child victims of labor abuses, and working with children who have previously entered the criminal justice system. (3,35) During the reporting period, the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) also continued to operate the “Red Button” hotline, a website application to report child abuse, human trafficking, hate crimes, and violence during the reporting period. (10) However, research indicates that some local police officials lacked knowledge on how to identify human trafficking victims and refer them to services. In addition, some members of the police were not aware of the specialized Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force (Task Force), even though both bodies are under the MOI. (9,11) Further, the lack of a digital case management system within the MOI has limited the ability to refer suspected human trafficking cases from local police to the Task Force or Public Prosecutor's Office. (10,36)

In 2022, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the MOI discovered seven human trafficking violations that involved children. One case involved trafficking for participation in forced begging. (3) Additionally, authorities identified another eight potential victims of human trafficking. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Coordination Body for the Prevention and Countering of Abuse and Neglect of Children	Led by MLSP in conjunction with the Ministries of Interior, Education and Science, Health, and Justice, as well as UNICEF and multiple NGOs around the country. (9,10) During the reporting period, the National Coordination Body continued to support programs to assist vulnerable children, including mobile team visits from social workers, law enforcement authorities, and civil society representatives. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a policy that covers all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration (2021–2025)	Focuses on preventing human trafficking by reducing the vulnerability of at-risk populations, improving the identification of victims, and increasing efforts to address human trafficking and forced child begging. (9,37) In 2022, the government prepared its annual operational plan, which included activities to improve victim identification. (3)
National Action Plan for Education (2018–2025)	Aims in part to expand inclusive education and improve education for the Roma community. Seeks to increase the number of Roma students in preschools and elementary schools and decrease the number of Roma students who, based on ethnicity, are enrolled in primary schools for children with special needs. (16,34) In 2022, the government continued to implement activities associated with the Plan, including hiring more teachers, providing scholarships for vulnerable Roma children, and fostering inclusion of vulnerable children via adapted coursework for first-time and returnee students, as well as children with special needs. (4)
National Strategy (2020-2025) and Action Plan for the National Strategy for Prevention and Countering Abuse and Neglect of Children (2020–2022)	Presented the vision, goals, and strategic approach of the government and the activities to be undertaken annually in the prevention and protection of children from all types of violence. Prepared by the National Coordination Body for Prevention and Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect. (39) During the reporting period, the government continued to implement activities as designated by the National Action Plan for 2020–2022. (3)

North Macedonia maintains bilateral agreements to address human trafficking with all its neighboring countries. (35,36)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
MLSP-Operated and Funded Centers and Shelters†	MLSP-operated and funded programs, sometimes in coordination with NGOs, which provide support and services to victims of human trafficking and vulnerable populations such as street children. Additionally, MLSP provides extensive support for a day center to assist children participating in street work, and funds another center operated by an NGO to provide services, healthcare, and counseling to children working in the streets. (7,11,42) MLSP also funds the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking (operated by NGO Open Gate/ <i>La Strada</i>), a transit center for asylum seekers, and the MOI-operated Transit Center for Illegal Migrants. (9) During the reporting period, the MLSP Day Care Centers in Skopje assisted 36 children by providing educational support, healthcare, and counseling to children working in hazardous street settings. Additionally, the government continued to provide financial support for both the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking and the Transit Center for Illegal Migrants, plus two new temporary centers in Kumanovo and Gevgelija that provided assistance to migrants who are transiting through the country without proper legal documents. (3)
UNICEF Projects	UNICEF programs that work with the government to provide support to vulnerable children, including Roma and migrant children. (12) In 2022, the government continued to work with UNICEF to implement the Home for Every Child Program and a strategic plan targeting school violence. (12,43,44) UNICEF also facilitated the Early Warning System for Missing Children project in conjunction with the Macedonian Association of Young Lawyers, the NGO Journalists for Human Rights, and EKPAT-Austria. (3)
Child Allowance Program‡	Government-supported program providing monthly child allowance payments to low-income households and families receiving other forms of government assistance. (9) In 2022, the government continued to provide monthly allowances. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of North Macedonia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3,45-48)

Day centers and other programs continue to serve children forced into begging rings; however, research has determined that gaps remain between some existing social programs and their capacity to serve children considered to be most at-risk for economic exploitation. (7,9)

North Macedonia

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in North Macedonia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that labor law protections apply to all children, including self-employed children and children working outside formal employment relationships.	2015 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Provide labor inspectors and the Ministry of Interior with electronic systems to record and share data on inspections.	2009 – 2022
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children engaged in child labor in order to inform the development of social programs supporting children at highest risk for economic exploitation.	2013 – 2022
	Increase efficacy of programs dedicated to addressing child labor and ensure that child beggars, especially Roma children, receive the support needed to be removed from street work permanently.	2015 – 2022
	Reduce barriers to education by increasing the number of teachers who can provide education in the Romani language.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, Oman made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking launched a new website in English and Arabic with information on how to report human trafficking crimes in 14 languages. Additionally, in cooperation with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the government drafted a new law to address human trafficking. It also continued its prosecution of two foreign nationals suspected of exploiting a Pakistani child in commercial sexual exploitation under the Law to Combat Human Trafficking. Child labor is not visible in Oman, although a small number may work informally with their families, including in fishing and farming. Survey data are needed on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Oman. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		99.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: Data were unavailable from ILO's analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.




Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3)
	Fishing, activities unknown (3)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Oman has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

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The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 1, 8, and 75 of the Labor Law (4)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 45, 46, and 71 of the Child Law; Article 2 of Ministry of Manpower Order 217/2016 (5,6)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 5 of Ministry of Manpower Order 217/2016 (5)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1, 2, 8, and 9 of the Anti-Trafficking Law; Article 3 bis of the Labor Law (4,7)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1, 2, 8, and 9 of the Anti-Trafficking Law (7)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 1, 2, 8, and 9 of the Anti-Trafficking Law; Articles 254, 255, and 267 of the Penal Code (7,8)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 58 and 74 of the Child Law; Article 43 of the Law on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (6,9)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Article 55 of the Child Law (6)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 55 of the Child Law (6)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 1(f), 55, and 72 of the Child Law (6)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 36 of the Child Law (6,10)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 13 of the Basic Law; Article 36 of the Child Law (6,11)

* Country has no conscription (12)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (6,10)

In cooperation with UNODC, the government drafted and reviewed a new law to address human trafficking during the reporting period; enactment of the law is expected in 2023. (13)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/ Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Monitors and enforces child labor laws, conducts labor inspections, and shares information with the Royal Oman Police on labor and criminal law violations when penalties are pursued. (14) According to the government, MOL conducts yearly inspections of all private institutions and re-inspections of workplaces found to be in violation of labor laws. Labor inspections are also conducted following a complaint. (14,15) If a violation is found, the institution is given a set period of time to address the problem. If an institution fails to address the violation, a fine may be levied. (14,15) MOL can refer cases of child labor to the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) if the child is under the minimum age for work. MOL and MOSD can also coordinate with the Royal Oman Police to shelter child victims and refer suspected violators for criminal investigation. (14) In addition, the labor inspectorate has a specialized unit composed to two people to conduct inspections related to suspected human trafficking. The unit is charged with bringing indicators of trafficking to the ministry and transferring cases to the Public Prosecutor's Office for further investigation. (16)
Royal Oman Police	Monitor and enforce the Child Law, including its provisions related to child labor, and refer cases to the Office of the Public Prosecutor. (14) In 2022, the National Committee on Human Trafficking provided more than 20 trainings on preventing, identifying, reporting, investigating, and prosecuting human trafficking cases to police personnel and others in the government and private sector, including military attaches, airport security officers, labor inspectors, prosecutors, and hotel staff. (13)
Office of the Public Prosecutor	Investigates and prosecutes human trafficking and sexual exploitation cases with assistance from the Royal Oman Police. Maintains specialized interview rooms for child witnesses and assigns social workers to guide children through their interactions with the government. (16,17) During the reporting period, the government continued its prosecution of two foreign nationals suspected of exploiting a Pakistani child in prostitution under the Law to Combat Human Trafficking.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, the government's labor law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (14)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	282 (18)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (4,5,19)	Yes (4,5,19)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (18)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	Unknown (14)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (14)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (14)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (14)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (14)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (14)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (19)	Yes (19)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (14)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (14)	Yes (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (14)	Yes (14)

In 2022, the Ministry of Labor carried out labor inspections, including in sectors where child labor may be found such as street vending. (20,21) Additionally, the government did not provide labor law enforcement data for inclusion in this report.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, the government's criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (14)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	2 (22,23)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	2 (23,24)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	2 (22,23)	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (23,24)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (14)	Yes

During the reporting period, the government continued its prosecution of two foreign nationals suspected of exploiting a Pakistani child in prostitution under the Law to Combat Human Trafficking. (16) Additionally, the government did not publish criminal law enforcement data for inclusion in this report.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Child Protection Committee	Consists of representatives from MOSD, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Royal Oman Police. Receives complaints and reports of child labor and investigates reported cases to determine whether children are engaged in prohibited activities or whether working has negative effects on their health or education. Also refers children who are victims of abuse, neglect, or other related issues to social services, and works with UNICEF on several projects related to child protection. (3) Active in 2022. (25)

Oman additionally has a National Council on Combating Human trafficking (NCCHT), which consists of relevant government ministries, the Oman Human Rights Council, the Oman Chamber of Commerce, and the General Federation of Oman Workers. The NCCHT oversees the implementation of the National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking. (26)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking (2021–2023)	Aims to educate stakeholders on their rights and responsibilities, trains authorities on addressing human trafficking, coordinates government services for survivors, and develops new policies and best practices. In 2022, the government held events and trainings on human trafficking issues throughout the country. (27)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of preventing child labor (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Social Security Cash Transfer Program†	Provides assistance to children in low-income families, including educational services. (14) Annual benefits under the program exceed \$278 million. In 2022, 73,790 individuals benefited from the program, including 2,300 orphans and 59,030 students. (25)
Dar al-Wifaq Shelter†	MOSD operates a shelter, Dar al Wifaq, for women and child victims of human trafficking; 15 of the shelter's beds are allocated for children. The shelter provides a number of services for victims of human trafficking that include psychological counseling, health care, and pro bono legal advocacy through the Lawyers Association. (13) In 2022, the shelter accommodated several child trafficking victims from Pakistan and Yemen. (13)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Oman.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Oman (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Collect and publish data on labor and criminal law enforcement efforts taken to address child labor.	2013 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022

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In 2022, Pakistan made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Pakistan amended existing laws by increasing penalties for crimes related to child trafficking, child pornography, and employing of child domestic workers. The Punjab Labor Department also conducted over 6,000 inspections at brick kilns, identified 239 child labor violations, and arrested 60 perpetrators. Lastly, the Sindh provincial government created a task force to review child labor laws and recommend amendments to fill gaps in current provincial legislation. However, children in Pakistan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in domestic work, brick manufacturing, and agriculture. Pakistan's provincial labor inspectorates do not have sufficient human and financial resources, and enforcement data are unavailable. Furthermore, police corruption, particularly the taking of bribes from suspected perpetrators to ignore child labor crimes and a lack of willingness to conduct criminal investigations, hindered Pakistan's ability to address child labor throughout the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Pakistan.

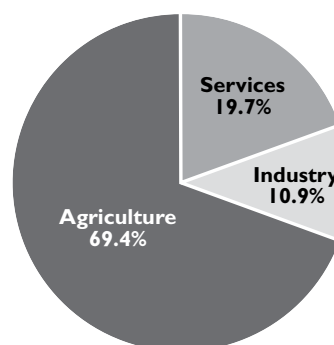
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	9.8 (2,261,704)
Attending School (%)	10 to 14	78.0
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	0.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		72.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2017–2018 and from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5, 2014. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including harvesting cotton, sugarcane, and wheat (3-6)
	Fishing, including deep sea fishing† (6)
	Poultry farming (7)
Industry	Manufacturing glass bangles,† surgical instruments,† and jewelry (3,8,9)
	Weaving carpets,† producing garments, and tanning leather† (8,10-13)
	Producing bricks (8,10-13)

Pakistan

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Mining coal† and gemstones, and crushing stone† (10,14,15)
	Construction (7)
Services	Domestic work (13,16,17)
	Working in hotels, restaurants, gas stations, automobile repair, and shoe shining (10,12,13,18)
	Scavenging† and sorting garbage and recyclables, begging, and street vending (12,18,19)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in agriculture, brickmaking, carpet weaving, small shops, and coal mining (5,13,20)
	Forced domestic work (5,13,21)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,13,20,22)
	Forced begging (5,13)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (5,13)
	Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking and production of drugs (12,13,23)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Child laborers in Pakistan are sometimes subjected to sexual abuse at their places of employment, including in factories and workshops, or while scavenging on the streets. (13,18) They are also sometimes subjected to sexual exploitation to obtain or keep their jobs. (5) Moreover, one in every four households in Pakistan employs children as child domestic workers who sometimes work under conditions of forced labor, experiencing debt bondage, sexual assault, and physical abuse. (5,13,16,17) Since the 2022 floods, more children have entered domestic servitude to repay loans their parents have taken from landlords. (13) Furthermore, reports estimate that around 70 percent of bonded laborers in Pakistan are children, and they make up one-third of the 4 million people working in brick kilns, some working alongside other family members. (13,24) In Sindh Province, almost 700,000 children in the agricultural sector work as bonded laborers. (13)




Some children from Pakistan are kidnapped or sold into organized begging rings, domestic servitude, gangs, and child sex trafficking in Iran. (5,13,25) Organized criminal groups also reportedly force Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani children, particularly from Dalbadin and Quetta in Balochistan, into drug trafficking. (5,20,25) In addition, children are used in drug smuggling operations along the Afghan border with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (13,19,26) Moreover, non-state armed militant groups reportedly kidnap children as young as age 12, coerce parents with threats, and recruit children forcibly from *madrassas*—Islamic religious schools that provide free education and meals to Pakistan’s poorest children—to spy, fight, and carry out suicide attacks. (26) Sexual abuse of children in *madrassas* is also of significant concern. (27,28)

Children in Pakistan face several barriers to education. (13,29) As of 2022, an estimated 22.8 million children in Pakistan were out of school. (13) Insufficient internet coverage in many rural areas, especially in the newly merged tribal districts of the former federally administered tribal areas and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, has hampered children’s access to meaningful learning. (13,29) Many other children face barriers to accessing education, including high rates of teacher absenteeism, inadequate facilities, lack of transportation, school fees, corporal punishment, and child sex abuse, all of which may deter children from attending school. (13,30,31) The 2022 floods further affected children’s access to schools, particularly in the rural areas, where 27,000 schools were severely damaged. (13) Schools in Pakistan may also be vulnerable to attacks by armed groups, disrupting children’s learning. (8,19,20,25,30,32)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Pakistan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

In November 2022, Pakistan ratified the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. (33,34)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Pakistan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of a minimum age for hazardous work protections that extend to all children at the federal level and in some provinces.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Section 50 of the Factories Act; Sections 2, 20, and 27 of the West Pakistan Shops and Establishments Ordinance; Sections 2 and 26 of the Mines Act; Sections 3 and 11 of the Road Transport Workers Ordinance; Sections 2, 3, 7, and 14 of the Pakistan Employment of Children Act (35-39)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	14	Sections 2 and 3 of the Employment of Children Act (39)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Parts 1 and 2 of the Schedule of the Employment of Children Act (39)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2, 3 and 7 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Section 4 of the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act; Sections 367, 370, 371A, 371B, and 374 of the Penal Code (40-42)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 2, 3, 4, and 7 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 366A, 366B, 370, and 371 of the Penal Code; Sections 2 and 3 of the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance (41-43)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 292, 366A, 366B, 371A, 371B, and 377A-B of the Penal Code; Sections 2, 3, and 7 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (41,42,44)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 3 of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (45)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 3 of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (45)

* Country has no conscription (46)

† The minimum age for work in shops and establishments is 14 years old. The minimum age for work in factories and mines is 15 years old. (35-37)

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The Eighteenth Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution permits provinces to pass laws that govern labor law and children's welfare. (47,48) Federal law applies only until the province passes a law on the same subject. (47) During the reporting period, the Senate enacted the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (Amendment) Act of 2021, which allows appropriate government ministries to approve policies related to child rights issues without seeking approval from the cabinet, allowing for the issuance of policies in a timely manner. (49) In October 2022, the government also enacted the Islamabad Domestic Workers Act (2022), which applies to the Islamabad Capital Territory and prohibits the employment of children under 16 to work in a household, prescribes imprisonment of up to 1 month for employing children under the age of 12 and a fine of up to \$175 (PKR 50,000) for employing a child under the age of 16, and provides other protections, including minimum wage provisions, restrictions on working hours, and regular time off. (13) In addition, the government amended colonial-era law by enacting the Children (Pledging of Labor) (Amendment) Act of 2022, which applies to the Islamabad Capital Territory and provides punishment for parents or guardians pledging the labor of their child to potential employers. (13)

Some of Pakistan's federal and provincial laws are not in compliance with international standards on child labor. The federal minimum age for work provisions and the minimum age for work laws in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh Provinces do not extend to informal employment, such as domestic work. (35,38,50-53) In addition, as the hazardous work age at the federal level and in Balochistan is less than age 18, it does not meet international standards. (39,54) While the federal government and the four provinces have identified hazardous occupations and activities for children, hazardous work prohibitions do not cover brickmaking, for which there is evidence that children are exposed to environmental health hazards. (10,55) Additionally, hazardous work prohibitions for the federal and provincial governments do not cover child domestic work, for which there is evidence that children are exposed to physical abuse. (19,56) Punjab limits domestic work for children ages 15 to 18 to part-time work that is not likely to harm the health, safety, and education of a domestic worker, but does not prevent children under 18 from engaging in this work. (51) Although laws in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh Provinces prohibit children under age 18 from working in underground mines or above-ground quarries, federal law—which also still applies in Balochistan—does not prohibit children ages 15 to 18 from working in mines, and there is evidence that children in Balochistan are engaged in coal mining, which involves exposure to hazardous substances, work underground, and lethal accidents. (37,47,50,52-54,57,58) Research was unable to identify a law explicitly establishing a minimum age for voluntary military recruitment.

Federal and provincial laws related to forced labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation meet international standards. However, federal and provincial laws in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa do not prohibit the use of children in drug production and drug trafficking. (53,59,60) The federal and provincial governments in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have not enacted laws that prohibit the recruitment and use of children by non-state groups in armed conflict. (52,59) Moreover, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (45,52,61-63)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Provincial and Regional Labor and Criminal Law Enforcement Agencies	Pakistan's provinces are responsible for enforcing labor laws, including those relevant to child labor. Provincial labor inspectors inspect industrial areas and markets to identify child labor violations, pursue legal action against employers, and collect enforcement data at the district level. (64) Refer children taken into custody to Child Protection Officers. (65,66) Provincial labor courts assess penalties for labor violations and are located in each province and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). In addition, provincial and regional police enforce violations of federal and provincial laws concerning the worst forms of child labor, including the Pakistan Penal Code, the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, and the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act. (20,25,67,68)
Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Anti-Trafficking Unit	Enforces transnational human trafficking-related laws, particularly the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act. Cooperates with other governments on human trafficking cases, operates a hotline for survivors, and publishes information on anti-trafficking efforts on its website. (5,20,22,30) The Ministry of Interior and FIA, along with other civil society groups, published the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling 2021–2025. (5)
District Vigilance Committees (DVCs)	Assist in rehabilitating bonded laborers according to the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act. Consist of members of the public, civil society groups, lawyers, members of the media, and local government officials and report to the District Magistrate. (25,40,69) Exist in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the ICT, but not in Balochistan Province. (25) DVCs were functioning in all of Punjab Province's 36 districts and established in 14 districts in Sindh Province. However, Sindh DVCs were nonfunctional during the reporting period. (19,49,70) The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government issued orders to establish DVCs in all of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's districts in 2021; however, reports indicate there was only one DVC established and functioning in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province during the reporting period. (71)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Pakistan took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the provincial labor departments that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of human and financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (39)	Yes (39)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (19)	Yes (13)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (35)	Yes (35)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (19)	Yes (13)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)

Pakistan's provinces are responsible for enforcing labor laws and collecting data on labor law enforcement efforts at the district level. However, there is neither a centralized federal repository for enforcement data nor any mechanism for reporting this information; therefore, limited labor inspection data were available for inclusion in this report. (13) Although provincial labor departments reportedly conducted routine inspections, it is unknown whether inspections were targeted in high-risk sectors. (13) Likewise, provincial labor departments permit unannounced inspections, but it is unknown whether unannounced inspections were conducted. Moreover, factory owners in the Sindh province often deny inspectors access to their facilities, and inspections are often announced in advance. (13) Some garment factories reportedly paid bribes to provincial labor officers to avoid

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inspections, and some factories prevented officials from conducting inspections. (5) However, research indicates that the Punjab Labor Department conducted 53,058 child labor inspections and reported 1,110 violations, resulting in 1,101 police reports that help initiate investigations. The Punjab Labor Department also conducted 6,983 inspections at brick kilns and found 239 child labor violations, making 60 arrests. (13) In addition, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region has eight child protection courts, but as of the end of 2022, these courts had not adjudicated any child labor cases. (13)

The ILO and NGOs report the number of labor inspectors and inspections in Pakistan is insufficient given the size and population of the country. (13,72) Sources also indicate that provincial labor departments lack funding for travel outside of major cities to conduct inspections and some labor inspectors use their personal resources to carry out inspections. (13) In addition, training provided to law enforcement officials during the reporting period was insufficient, and it is unknown whether a reciprocal mechanism exists between law enforcement and social services. (10,13)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Pakistan took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including reports of corruption and indifference to worst forms of child labor crimes on the part of investigative officials.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (19)	Yes (13)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)

The government did not publish data on efforts to enforce criminal laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor, including data on the investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, or convictions achieved for inclusion in this report. (3,13) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa did enact the Child Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Act, 2022, which provides sufficiently stringent punishment for perpetrators of child sexual abuse, child pornography, child trafficking, and other offenses related to child rights. (13) However, reports indicate that progress toward the implementation and enforcement of the law has been slow. (13) During the reporting period, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)'s Cyber Crime Wing made two arrests related to child pornography that were widely covered in national media. (13,73,74) FIA also conducted trainings on anti-human trafficking standard operating procedures in the capital and in provincial social welfare departments, labor departments, and child protection bureaus in 2022. In addition, FIA worked with the IOM to provide trainings on identifying, screening, and referring survivors of human trafficking and child labor. (13) However, training is inconsistent across Pakistan and omits information on child labor, child trafficking, and sexual exploitation of children. (13)

Police corruption—particularly taking bribes from suspected perpetrators to ignore alleged crimes or refusing to open investigations without bribes—continued to hamper Pakistan's ability to address child sex trafficking and child labor. (5,7) Reports indicated that police sometimes refused to file cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, unless the victims paid a bribe. (5,15,19,24) Moreover, the government did not act against reports of official complicity with human trafficking crimes. (5,26) Furthermore, research identified a lack of consistent law enforcement efforts against those who exploit street children, including for forced labor and sex trafficking, and traffickers operate openly and with impunity. (5,20,25)

A majority of the estimated 18,000 brick kilns in Pakistan operates without registration or providing required benefits for workers, particularly those ages 14 to 18. (69,75) Survivors of bonded labor settled for financial compensation rather than criminal prosecution because guidance to pursue a formal criminal case is lacking. (5) Furthermore, some police and other local officials colluded with farm and brick kiln owners to create fake criminal cases against individuals who attempted to escape situations of bonded labor. (7) Research has also found that though the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act mandated the creation of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) in each province to report and file cases, bonded labor survivors had to leave their landowners and file their own cases in court without DVC support. (5) In addition, in some situations in which bonded labor survivors filed cases, the courts either did not pursue prosecutions or notified the survivors' employers of the case. As a result, human trafficking survivors who came forward often faced retaliation from their exploitative employers. (5)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including inadequate funding and human resources at the provincial level for child protection units.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Coordination Bodies	<p>Provincial Child Protection Units (CPUs) coordinate and initiate interventions against child labor at the provincial level. (76) Take into custody at-risk children, including those rescued from exploitative labor situations, and provide case management services. (76) Present cases of children to the Child Protection Court or other appropriate authorities. (76) Each CPU is led by a Child Protection Officer supported by social workers and psychologists and operates under the District Administrator. (25) As of 2022, there were 14 CPUs to support children in Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with additional CPUs in Punjab. (77,78) Despite passing legislation in 2016, Balochistan only has 1 CPU in Quetta with 33 CPUs yet to be established. (49) CPUs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained unstaffed and non-functioning due to the COVID-19 pandemic and funding delays; the Chief Child Protection Officer position has remained vacant for 5 years. (13) In addition to CPUs, Pakistan has several provincial child protection commissions, bureaus, and authorities in each province with different mandates related to coordinating efforts to enhance safety and rights of children in Pakistan. (13,60,79) For example, during the reporting period, the Punjab Child Protection and Welfare Bureau rescued 9,673 children and provided shelter or reunited them with their families, as well as took custody of over 1,000 children. The bureau also organized awareness programs in schools, colleges, and universities, and held a training program for the Rawalpindi police. (13) In December 2022, the bureau organized a provincial conference on child protection in Lahore. (13) Similarly, the Sindh Child Protection Authority has been active in preventing underage marriages throughout the province. The Sindh helpline 1121 has been used to track and respond to complaints about child beggary and corporal punishment at the provincial level. (80) The Sindh government created a Child Protection Task Force, which will review all laws related to child protection and recommend amendments in 2023 to fill in gaps in existing legislation. However, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Commission did not hold its required quarterly meetings during the reporting period. (13)</p>

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including lack of implementation of key national policies.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Labor Policy	Seeks to gradually eradicate child labor, collect child labor statistics, enforce the compulsory education law, assist children through referral mechanisms, educate families and key stakeholders about the negative effects of child labor, and collaborate with organizations to research and develop solutions to eliminate child labor. (81) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Labor Policy during the reporting period.
Punjab Labor Policy	Seeks to improve working conditions, eradicate child and bonded labor, and establish social safety for workers and their families. Includes the goal of ending all child labor in brick kilns, in addition to the construction of schools, hospitals, and residences for workers. (82) Consists of independent working and monitoring groups that include members of government, police, and civil society and are responsible for carrying out inspections, victim identification, and treatment of survivors under the guidance of this policy. (80) In 2022, the Punjab Labor Department conducted a series of special campaigns to raise awareness among workers and employers on their rights and obligations under the policy. (13) The Punjab Bureau of Statistics released results from a child labor survey on October 18, 2022, and reported child labor prevalence in the province at 13.4 percent. (6)
Sindh Labor Policy	Seeks to protect vulnerable workers, including children. Includes goals to enforce laws dealing with hazardous child labor, extend the minimum age for employment in domestic and home-based work, ensure minimum wages for working children, and increase access to education and training. (83) In 2021, the last date for which information is available, the Sindh Province Labor Department was undertaking a child labor survey to determine the prevalence of child labor in the province. (80) Research was unable to determine whether the survey was completed or if other activities were undertaken to implement the Sindh Labor Policy during the reporting period.

In 2022, the National Commission on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF issued a policy brief on child labor. (13) The brief examined the prevailing laws and enforcement mechanisms related to child domestic workers and street children and made recommendations to legislators, policy makers, and government agencies on how to address the prevalence of child domestic workers in Pakistan. (84,85) However, although both the federal and provincial governments have education policies and sector plans, which recognize the role of child labor in limiting student enrollment in schools, they do not offer child labor elimination and prevention strategies. (80)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Bait-ul-Mal Programs†	Government-funded programs that aim to remove children from child labor, including its worst forms, and to increase vulnerable children's access to education. Programs include the National Centers for Rehabilitation of Child Labor and the Child Support Program. (86,87) As of 2022, there were 159 Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal School for Rehabilitation of Child Labor centers in Pakistan, and around 17,000 students are enrolled in primary education. (88) The program also launched a new initiative to provide social protection and education to orphan girls, including cash transfers in the amount of \$21 to \$42 (PKR 6000 to 12000) to each family based on the number of orphan girls they foster. (89)
Hotlines and Institutes†	The Ministry of Human Rights (MHR) operates a helpline for reporting human rights violations, including child labor violations, and for providing referrals to legal aid and a network of NGOs to survivors of human rights abuses. (7,90) FIA also operates a 24/7 hotline to address human trafficking, including child trafficking, in Pakistan at the headquarters, ICT, and district levels. (22,90) In 2022, Child Protection and Welfare Bureau helpline received 2,626 calls which led to the rescue of over 1,000 children. (13) In 2021, MHR launched the Zainab app, which is integrated with the district police stations across the country and helps track and trace missing children as well as streamline efforts to address child abuse cases, including child labor cases in Pakistan. (91) Since its launch, the app has received 1,803 cases, with 710 cases being recorded in 2022. (13) However, reports indicate that the collection of provincial information for the app is decentralized, and the quality can vary from province to province. (13) During the reporting period, MHR helped establish a Child Protection Institute (CPI) in ICT under the Islamabad Territory Child Protection Act 2018 to provide services to at-risk and vulnerable children. The program will provide rehabilitation, rescue, shelter, counseling, and help with family tracing services for children who are survivors of trafficking and forced labor. (19,92) By the end of the reporting period, CPIs were functional in nine cities in Punjab, including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Multan, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yak Khan, and Sahiwal. In 2022, Punjab created two CPIs in Mandi Bahauaddin and Lodhran that registered abandoned children in the national database. (13)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Pakistan.

The government allocated \$5.2 million for provincial child labor surveys. Gilgit-Balistan published its survey online and Punjab completed its survey, publication pending. (13,100) The Gilgit-Balistan child labor survey shows that the average prevalence of child labor is around 13.1 percent, reaching 28 percent in some parts of the province. (101) The report also recommends the development of programs focusing on education, social protection, and laws to address child labor. (102) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh survey results are expected in 2023. (3,13)

Pakistan's social programs are insufficient to address the prevalence and scope of the country's child labor problem. In particular, existing programs do not provide sufficient protection and rehabilitation services for bonded child laborers and child survivors of human trafficking. (13,103) Government initiatives are also insufficient for children working in the informal sector, including for domestic workers. (19) In addition, there are no significant social programs to address sexual abuse of child workers or children attending *madrassas* in Pakistan. (80)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Pakistan (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Extend minimum age protections to all sectors and informal employment at the federal level as well as in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh Provinces.	2011 – 2022
	Prohibit the employment of children under age 18 in hazardous work, such as brickmaking, mining, and domestic work, at the federal level and in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh Provinces.	2009 – 2022
	Prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs, at the federal level and in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces.	2011 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment and use of children under age 18 by non-state groups, including at the federal level and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.	2015 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes a minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military in accordance with international standards.	2022
Enforcement	Ensure there are at least 4,388 labor inspectors to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 65.8 million people.	2016 – 2022
	Establish District Vigilance Committees in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces, and ensure that these committees are able to conduct public outreach and report and file cases.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that provincial labor inspectorates have enough financial and human resources to conduct inspections, including funding for travel outside of major cities.	2022
	Create a centralized repository for enforcement data and a regular mechanism for reporting enforcement information.	2018 – 2022
	Publish labor law enforcement information, including funding for provincial labor inspectorates, number of labor inspectors and whether they received training, whether reciprocal referral mechanisms exist between labor authorities and social services for all provinces, and the number of labor inspections conducted, child labor law violations found, and whether penalties were imposed and collected, routine inspections were targeted, and the number of unannounced inspections conducted.	2010 – 2022
	Establish a referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services in all provinces.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors receive regular training on child labor issues, including its worst forms.	2022
	Conduct unannounced inspections and hold accountable individuals preventing labor inspectors from accessing worksites.	2022
	Publish information about criminal law investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and sentences imposed, as well as training provided for criminal investigators.	2016 – 2022
	Establish sufficient laws to end police corruption, particularly the taking of bribes to create criminal cases against released bonded laborers, and from suspected perpetrators to ignore alleged human trafficking crimes.	2019 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies have enough human and financial resources to carry out investigations and prosecute perpetrators.	2022
	Prosecute and penalize employers who employ bonded laborers and ensure bonded labor survivors are protected from future retaliations for bringing their cases to court.	2020 – 2022
Coordination	Establish an adequate number of Child Protection Units in all provinces and ensure that they receive sufficient human and financial resources in a timely manner.	2017 - 2022
Government Policies	Publish information on the activities undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh Labor Policy.	2020 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into education policies and sector plans of provincial governments.	2014 – 2022
Social Programs	Establish programs that ensure that children are protected from sexual abuse in schools, including <i>madrassas</i> , and in workplaces, and while scavenging on the streets.	2021 – 2022
	Complete and publish child labor surveys at the federal and provincial levels.	2009 – 2022
	Improve existing programs to address the prevalence and scope of Pakistan's child labor problem, including providing enough protection and rehabilitation services for child domestic workers, bonded child laborers, child survivors of human trafficking, and other children working in the informal sector and in the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure all children have access to free and compulsory education, as required by law, by implementing programs to address high rates of teacher absenteeism, inadequate facilities, school fees, lack of transportation, internet access in rural areas—especially in the former federally administered tribal areas and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province—and use of corporal punishment.	2022

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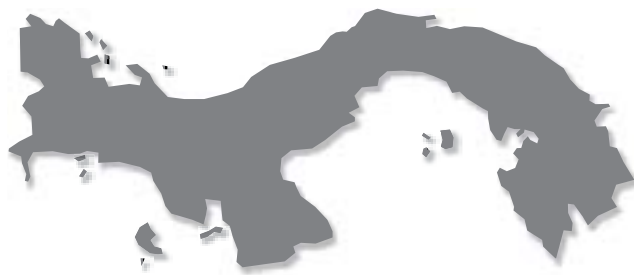
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In 2022, Panama made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Panama passed Law 285, establishing pecuniary penalties, suspension, and closure of commercial premises for companies found using child labor. The government also increased its number of labor inspectors from 105 to 198 and created new sub-committees to address child labor in the provinces of Chiriquí, Herrera, Panamá East, and Panamá Oeste. In addition, the government prepared a new 5-year National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Person and developed a network of private sector companies committed to eradicating child labor. However, children in Panama are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, Panamanian law allows minors under age 16 to engage in hazardous work within training facilities in violation of international standards. Moreover, labor law enforcement agencies lack the financial and human resources necessary to fulfill their mandates. Finally, existing social programs are insufficient to address the full scope of the child labor problem in the country, in particular for children living in rural areas and from indigenous and Afro-Panamanian communities.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Panama.

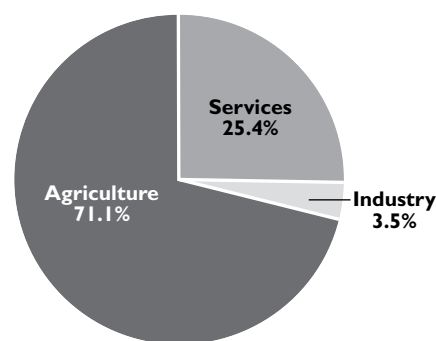
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.5 (33,594)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	5.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta de Trabajo Infantil (ETI), 2016. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of coffee, melons, and onions (3,4-8)
	Raising livestock, including cattle and poultry (3,9,10)
	Fishing† (3,4,8-10)
Industry	Construction,† including painting and carpentry (8,9,11)
Services	Domestic work† (3,9,10,12,13)
	Waste collection in garbage dumps† (8,14)
	Street work,† including vending,† washing cars, shining shoes,† and collecting recyclables† (3,4,8,10,11,15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced domestic work (16,17)
	Use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,4,8)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,8,12,16,18)
	Use in illicit activities, including in drug production and drug trafficking (8,10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Panama

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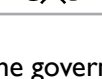
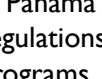
Children in Panama are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, as well as forced labor, particularly domestic servitude. (16) They also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, for which their working conditions may involve the use of chemicals, machinery, machetes, and other dangerous tools. (8,12) In addition, children working as street vendors are vulnerable to exploitation, gang activity, harassment, abuse, and vehicular accidents. (12)

Although the Panamanian Constitution recognizes the right to education without discrimination, indigenous, migrant, and Afro-Panamanian children in rural communities face barriers to accessing education due to a lack of transportation, documentation, infrastructure, quality sanitation, technology, and teachers, particularly in autonomous indigenous areas, or *comarcas*. (4,8,10,11) Some schools lack potable water and electricity, and in some cases, students in different grades are forced to share the same classroom. (10) Children of indigenous descent often live in difficult to reach areas and face severe inequity in education access. (8) Indigenous children have very low school enrollment rates, especially in secondary and higher education. (19) Panamanian law requires that schools integrate children with disabilities, but most public schools do not have adequate facilities for these children. (20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Panama has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Panama's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including regulations that permit children to perform hazardous work starting at age 14 while participating in training programs.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 70 of the Constitution; Articles 508, 509 and 716 of the Family Code; Articles 117, 119, and 123 of the Labor Code (21-23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Article 510 of the Family Code; Article 203 of the Penal Code; Article 4 of Executive Decree No. 19 of 2006; Article 118 of the Labor Code (21-26)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2, 2A, and 2B of Executive Decree No. 19 of 2006; Article 118 of the Labor Code (23,24,26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 207 and 456 of the Penal Code; Article 489 of the Family Code; Articles 4 and 63 of Law 79 on Human Trafficking; Article 21 of the Constitution (21,22,25,27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 205–208 and 456 of the Penal Code; Article 489.17 of the Family Code; Article 63 of Law 79 on Human Trafficking (22,25,27)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 179–187, 189–191, 202, 203, 207, and 456 of the Penal Code; Article 63 of Law 79 on Human Trafficking (25,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 318, 333, and 336 of the Penal Code; Article 489.16 of the Family Code; Article 2.16 of Executive Decree No. 19 of 2006 (22,25,26)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 448 of the Penal Code (25)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Articles 34 and 45 of the Law on Education; Article 489 of the Family Code; Article 95 of the Constitution (21,22,28,29)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 34 and 41 of the Law on Education; Article 95 of the Constitution (21,28,29)

† Country has no standing military (21)

In 2022, the Government of Panama ratified ILO convention 129 on inspection in agricultural work, which is meant to strengthen the country's labor inspection capacity in agricultural sectors. (30) Law 285 was also approved by the president on February 15, 2022. This law establishes protections for children related to economic exploitation, commercial sexual exploitation, and hazardous work. (31) The law also divided the responsibility for child labor issues between two agencies: the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family (SENNIAF) is now responsible for child labor issues in the informal sector, while the Ministry of Labor (MITRADEL) is responsible for child labor issues in the formal sector. In addition, the new law provides pecuniary penalties, suspension of business licenses or certificates of operation, and closure of commercial premises for companies promoting child labor. (8,31)

Panama has a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children under age 18, but it permits children to perform hazardous work in training programs starting at age 14, in violation of international standards. (24) Although the Constitution, Family Code, and Labor Code set the minimum age for employment at age 14, the Family Code and Labor Code specify exceptions for agricultural work. (21-23) Article 119 of the Labor Code allows children between the ages of 12 and 15 to perform light work in agriculture if the work is outside of regular school hours. The Labor Code, however, does not define the kinds of activities children may perform as light work. (23) In addition, the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (21-23,28,29)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MITRADEL)	Enforces child labor laws through two directorates with direct authority over child labor matters: the Directorate Against Child Labor and for the Protection of Adolescent Workers (DIRETIPAT), and the Labor Inspection Directorate. DIRETIPAT is responsible for overseeing the enforcement of laws related to working children, planning and executing public policies, and carrying out education programs on child labor for employers, parents, and children. (12,32,33) DIRETIPAT also manages the Direct Government Action Program for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor. Refers cases of children found in exploitative work to the Child and Adolescent Courts, or to the National Secretariat for Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (SENNIAF), which conducts inspections in the informal sector. (12) The Labor Inspection Directorate enforces the Labor Code in areas in which children may be working, particularly in the formal sector. (12)
Attorney General's Office	Investigates and prosecutes crimes of sexual exploitation. Investigations are initiated by the Judicial Investigative Directorate, after which cases are passed to the prosecutors. (12)
Juvenile Police	Assists, collaborates, and coordinates with authorities and organizations to address the education, prevention, protection, and rehabilitation of children, including those in child labor. (34) It is a special body of the National Police. (10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Panama took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor (MITRADEL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,151,738 (10)	\$1,071,188 (35)
Number of Labor Inspectors	105 (10)	198 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	14,686 (36)	29,866 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	4 (10)	7 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (10)	7 (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (10)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (8)

In 2022, MITRADEL identified 49 cases of child labor. (8) It also nearly doubled its number of labor inspectors by adding 93 to its labor inspectorate in 2022, for a total of 198 inspectors. (8,37) However, MITRADEL reported that only 20 inspectors focus exclusively on child labor, and that this number is insufficient to ensure child labor prevention and compliance of existing laws. (8,35) The number of labor inspections conducted at the workplace is a high number of inspections conducted by each inspector, and it is unknown whether this high number affects the quality and scope of inspections. (38) MITRADEL also reported a need for additional funding for tools such as telephones, laptops, and vehicles to carry out their work. (4,8,10,39)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Panama took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources and a lack of enforcement data made available.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (8)

The government did not provide information on the number of investigations and prosecutions, or the amount of funding provided for investigations for inclusion in this report. The Public Prosecutor's Office contains regional prosecutor offices that oversee indigenous issues in the country's *comarcas*; however, their effectiveness is hampered by the office's lack of fuel, boats, canoes, outboard motors, and four-wheel drive vehicles. (8) The Trafficking in Persons Commission and the Organized Crime Special Prosecutor's Office have both indicated that it is difficult to prosecute trafficking in persons cases, partially because judges lack knowledge of relevant laws. (40) The government also reported a number of cases in which companies sanctioned for violating child labor laws have not paid their required fines. (8,35)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Adolescent Workers (CETIPPAT)	Public-private institution led by the First Lady of Panama and includes MITRADEL, the ministries of Education, Health, and Agriculture, and representatives from civil society and organizations of workers and employers. (10,12,41) Conducts various efforts to address child labor, including national child labor surveys. (42,43) During the reporting period, the committee created new sub-committees for the provinces of Chiriquí, Herrera, Panama East, and Panama West. In addition to these new sub-committees, it adopted two new technical procedures to guide the safety and prevention of hazardous work that pertain to car wash and grocery store workers. (8) These technical procedures cover a number of different aspects of the job such as storing equipment and packing and transporting goods. (35)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Direct Government Action Program for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor	Provides a network of social and economic services to child workers and children at risk of child labor, including food and scholarships, support for sports activities, and social monitoring. (10,12) Led by MITRADEL and implemented through the Institute for Training and Utilization of Human Resources. (10) Replaced the Roadmap Towards the Elimination of Child Labor (2016–2019) in 2020. (4) In 2022, MITRADEL's child labor division registered 800 students nationally in the Direct Government Action Program for the 2023 school year. (8)
National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents	Seeks to prevent and eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, including by providing services to survivors, strengthening the National Commission for the Prevention of Crimes of Sexual Exploitation (CONAPREDES), and raising awareness. Implemented by CONAPREDES, with support from the Public Ministry. (10,41,44) Research was unable to determine whether activities were taken to implement this strategy during the reporting period.
National Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2012–2022)	Addresses human trafficking through prevention, victim assistance, and international cooperation. Includes provisions to protect child victims of human trafficking. (10,39,45) During the reporting period, the Government of Panama, through the Trafficking in Persons Commission, finished a new 5-year National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2022–2027), soon to be published. (18,46) The new plan includes lines of action such as developing new strategic alliances between government agencies to conduct joint labor inspections, building the first temporary shelter for the exclusive care of human trafficking survivors, and implementing new training strategies for the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Judiciary. (46) The plan is currently under the review of the Ministry of Security's legal office before obtaining presidential approval. (38)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including their ability to reach the most vulnerable populations.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
SENNIAF Programs†	Provides services to children engaged in the worst forms of child labor. (8,11) The Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor program identifies children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, removes them from exploitative situations, and connects them to a network of social and economic services offered by the government. Maintains a case processing system to efficiently manage reports and help reduce report processing times. (11) The Prevention and Care for Child and Adolescent Victims of Sexual Violence program identifies children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, removes them from exploitative situations, and provides them with social services. Conducts training workshops nationwide for professionals providing direct care to child and adolescent survivors of sexual violence. (47) SENNIAC continued its existing social programs in rural and urban areas, as well as maintaining a network of government services to address the needs of children and offering guidance to parents during the reporting period. (8)
Network of Opportunities†	Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) program that provides families in extreme poverty with cash transfers that are conditioned on their children's participation in health and education services and the acquisition of a birth certificate. Offers training to project participants to improve income-generating opportunities. (8,10) MIDES continued the Network of Opportunities program without significant changes during the reporting period. (8)
El Plan Colmena†	Seeks to reduce poverty and inequality via a multisectoral strategy that includes local governments, public institutions, the private sector, civil society, and community leaders to promote development and address vulnerability. (8) Through these actors, the plan prioritizes 12 areas of intervention including comprehensive childhood care, improved nutrition, access to clean water and basic sanitation, health, education, and the development of productive capacities to ensure the sustainability of communities. (42) The program is also responsible for the creation of the "Child Labor Free Districts" strategy, in which MITRADEL engages with local municipal governments to identify cases of child labor. (8) During the reporting period, the government held several meetings to discuss progress in expanding the plan into the provinces of Panama Oeste, Panamá, Los Santos, Veraguas and Colón. (48)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Panama.

During the reporting period, MITRADEL, in conjunction with the National Council of Private Enterprise (CONEP) launched the new initiative called Let's Stop Child Labor (*Dejemos en Cero al Trabajo Infantil*). The new initiative creates a network of private sector companies with the aim of eradicating child labor. (49) This network provides a training plan, a space to share international and national experiences, project coordination support with other companies, and coordination of MITRADEL's joint program for the employability of adolescents of legal working age. The project is supported by the Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean, funded by the European Union, and executed by the ILO. (49) MITRADEL has also continued its work with NGO Casa Esperanza to provide care for 250 children and adolescents. (8)

Although the Government of Panama has expanded programs that reach children in rural areas and from indigenous and Afro-Panamanian communities, reports indicate that the scope of these programs is insufficient. (8) Despite policy efforts, the National Anti-Trafficking Commission acknowledges that funding and availability of services for human trafficking survivors remain insufficient to address the full scope of the problem. Furthermore, although survivors of child trafficking are able to receive services from local NGOs, Panama lacks programs to specifically address the needs of this population. (50) Government officials have also noted that despite funds dedicated to the prevention of crimes against children, Panama lacks a specific mechanism to direct funds toward child sexual abuse survivors. (51,52)

In the past, there were widespread allegations of abuse against children in SENNIAC facilities, specifically shelters, which were later verified through an independent investigation. Child trafficking survivors in Panama are referred by the government to SENNIAC to receive services, including shelter, which are administered by NGOs and religious organizations. (17) Yet children in these facilities are vulnerable to recruitment by human traffickers. Reports also indicate that SENNIAC's budget is insufficient to support restructuring or other largescale efforts needed to reduce children's risk of suffering abuse in these facilities, which heightens their vulnerability to exploitation. (17)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Panama (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law protects children from hazardous work by establishing a minimum age of 18 for all children or by ensuring that children receive adequate training in the type of work being done and that the health, safety, and morals of children are protected in accordance with international standards if children aged 16 or 17 are allowed to perform hazardous work.	2013 – 2022
	Establish regulations that define the types of activities that children ages 12 to 14 can undertake as light work.	2009 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Allocate sufficient funding for resources such as telephones, laptops, and vehicles so that the labor inspectorate can meet its commitments for coordination, implementation, and monitoring related to child labor.	2014 – 2022
	Further increase the number of inspectors in the labor inspectorate to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 1.9 million people.	2022
	Collect and make available information on the number of investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and penalties imposed and collected related to the worst forms of child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that judges are sufficiently trained on laws related to forced labor, the worst forms of child labor, and human trafficking to ensure that these crimes can be effectively prosecuted.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure the number of inspections conducted by labor inspectors is appropriate to ensure the quality and scope of inspections.	2022
Government Policies	Take steps to implement key policies related to child labor and publish information about these efforts on an annual basis.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including children from rural areas and indigenous and Afro-Panamanian communities, by expanding existing programs to cover transportation and infrastructure for children with disabilities.	2014 – 2022
	Establish programs and ensure sufficient funding to address the needs of human trafficking survivors, including programs that provide services to child survivors of human trafficking and sexual abuse.	2018 – 2022

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In 2022, Papua New Guinea made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government reintroduced the Government Tuition Fee Subsidy Policy, which pledges to cover 100 percent of school fees for students. However, children in Papua New Guinea are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining and deep-sea fishing. Papua New Guinea's hazardous work prohibitions do not comply with international standards because they allow children ages 16 and older to engage in hazardous work, which is below the international standard of 18 years old. Papua New Guinea also does not have laws that sufficiently protect children from commercial sexual exploitation because using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. Papua New Guinea also does not have sufficient prohibitions against child trafficking because the law requires that threats, the use of force, or coercion be established for the crime of child trafficking. Moreover, although exact funding levels are unknown, the labor inspectorate does not have sufficient resources to adequately enforce Papua New Guinea's labor laws, including sufficient trainings for labor inspectors.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Papua New Guinea. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		77.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working in agriculture, including on coffee, tea, copra, and palm oil plantations (3,4)
	Deep-sea fishing (5)
	Herding of livestock (5)
Industry	Work in manufacturing (4)
	Mining and quarrying, including gold mining (4)
Services	Manual labor (6)
	Domestic work (4)
	Street work, including begging (4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6)
	Forced labor in domestic work, portering, and begging (6)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (4)
	Forced mining, including panning for gold (6)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Papua New Guinea is a source and destination country for child trafficking, especially of girls. Children exploited for sex trafficking or engaged in street work, such as begging or vending, are vulnerable to crime, traffic accidents, hunger, punishment from relatives, and illness. (4,6) Additionally, children are subjected to forced labor in industries such as mining, portering, and forced domestic work to pay off family debts. (6) Dangerous tasks in the mining industry, such as handling chemicals like mercury used in gold mining, are often performed without appropriate training and equipment. Similarly, in the agriculture sector, children are put at risk of drowning while deep-sea diving for sea cucumbers and pearls. (4)

During the reporting period, the Government of Papua New Guinea reinstated the Government Tuition Fee Subsidy Policy for students from age 6 through age 18. The policy pledges to cover 100 percent of school fees and the government has allocated a budget of more than \$176 million (623 million Papua New Guinea kina) to support the policy. (4,7,8) However, schools are still allowed to collect project fees from parents. (7) Additionally, a lack of essential resources, such as classrooms and textbooks, and limited transportation remain a barrier to accessible education. (4,7) Some of the most pressing barriers to education include unpaid teachers, a lack of transportation, aging infrastructure, and a lack of reliable water supplies and sanitation facilities, all of which are exacerbated by the government frequently failing in its obligation to provide schools with sufficient funding. (4) In previous years, some schools did not receive a subsidy and subsequently closed due to aging infrastructure. (4,9) Schools also face disruptions due to natural disasters because almost 80 percent of schools lack electricity, limiting remote and online-based learning opportunities. (10,11) In addition, research found that the threat of gender-based violence prevents many girls from attending school. (12) Papua New Guinea lacks comprehensive research and data on child labor, which affects the government's ability to address child labor in the country. (4)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Papua New Guinea has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Papua New Guinea's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 103 of the Employment Act (13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	16	Article 104 of the Employment Act (13)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 23 and 43 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea; Section 208 of the Criminal Code (14,15)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Section 208 of the Criminal Code (15)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 229J–229O, 229R, and 229S of the Criminal Code (16)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Section 30 of the Defense Act (17)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

* Country has no conscription (18)

Papua New Guinea's existing legal framework governing child labor does not meet international standards in a number of areas. Although Papua New Guinea meets international standards for the minimum age for work, Article 103 of the Papua New Guinea Employment Act permits children ages 11 through 16 to work under certain conditions, including with parental consent and if the child works only with members of the family. (13,19) Children as young as age 11 are permitted to perform light work, without enumerating what forms of labor may be classified as “light work” and without establishing a limit on the number of hours a child under age 16 may be made to work. (13,19) Papua New Guinea's existing law on the minimum age for hazardous work under Article 104 of Papua New Guinea's Employment Act sets the minimum age for engaging in hazardous labor activities at age 16 rather than age 18. Additionally, the law does not list hazardous occupations that are prohibited for children. (13,19) The National Education Plan does not include an age up to which education is compulsory. (8) However, although the Government Tuition Fee Subsidy Policy was reinstated in 2022, the policy allows schools to charge project fees. (7)

Papua New Guinea also does not have laws that prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. (20) The law does not sufficiently protect children from commercial sexual exploitation because using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. (16) Lastly, the prohibitions against child trafficking are insufficient because they require that threats, the use of force, or coercion be established for the crime of child trafficking. (15,21)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations	Directly employs all labor inspectors in the country and identifies hazards that child workers are exposed to in various sectors. (4)
Department of Youth, Religion, and Community Development	Through the Office of Child and Family Welfare Services, implements, oversees, and enforces the Child Protection (<i>Lukautim Pikinini</i>) Act, including provisions on child labor and its worst forms, and has conducted trainings for Papua New Guinea's Child Protection Officers. (10,22,23)
Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary	Enforces laws against commercial sexual exploitation of children. (10,24) Includes the specialized Family and Sexual Violence Unit, which protects children's rights and safety. (24)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of a reciprocal referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (13)	Yes (4,13)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (13)	Yes (13)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Unknown (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (10)	Unknown (4)

The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations lacks a data monitoring system to track child labor cases, which may hamper its efforts to address child labor concerns in Papua New Guinea. (10) Research was unable to determine whether there is a referral mechanism for survivors of child labor and exploitation. The Department of Youth, Religion, and Community Development has not yet implemented a system to refer children for protection and shelter. (4) The Department does conduct some trainings for Child Protection Officers who provide referrals for children and families. However, the scope of the training is unknown. (4)

The Government of Papua New Guinea did not respond to requests for information related to its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (4) Research indicates that Papua New Guinea does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (4,25) Due to limited personnel capacity, labor inspectors generally respond to specific child labor violations on a case-by-case basis as complaints are filed. The labor inspectorate does not have sufficient resources to adequately enforce Papua New Guinea's labor laws, including sufficient trainings for labor officers. (4) Due to this lack of resources, the ability to conduct inspections outside of major urban centers, where most child labor occurs, is limited. When labor inspections do occur, they are conducted in all three of Papua New Guinea's major business languages (English, Hiri-Motu, and Pidgin/Tok Pisin). (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (10)	Unknown (4)

The Government of Papua New Guinea did not respond to requests for information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (4) Although specific funding allocations are unknown, research indicates that there are generally not enough officers to conduct criminal investigations into child labor accusations due to a lack of funding, training, and report writing skills. (4) Research was unable to find evidence of trainings occurring in 2022 and was unable to determine whether training for prospective law enforcement officials addresses all child labor elimination components, including recognizing the worst forms of child labor, victim identification, and prevention strategies. (4) Additionally, poor prosecutorial efforts including a widespread observance of customary justice practices have resulted in a distrust of law enforcement among survivors of human trafficking. Furthermore, political will among law enforcement is lacking, stemming from insufficient funds to conduct investigations, particularly in rural areas. (6)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a mechanism to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee (NAHTC)	Coordinates efforts to address human trafficking. NAHTC met once in March 2022 but continued to lack sufficient resources and commitment from the government. (6) In addition, as in previous years, NAHTC failed to appoint specific committee members to represent relevant agencies and effectively excluded non-governmental stakeholders. Moreover, some key interagency stakeholders and senior government officials were unaware of the Committee's existence. (6)

Although Papua New Guinea has the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee to coordinate efforts to address human trafficking, it does not have a coordinating mechanism to address other forms of child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of key national policies. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor in Papua New Guinea during the reporting period.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea	Promotes government coordination efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through more effective prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures and capacity building. (3)
National Child Protection Policy (2017–2027)	Seeks to strengthen child protection laws, including increased data gathering and analysis, full implementation of the <i>Lukautim Pikinini Act</i> , and elimination of violence against children at the hands of the police. (29)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the full scope of the problem.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Child Care Centers†	Provide a safe location for children removed by Child Protection Officers from situations deemed to be harmful to their health and safety. (4,23) Research was unable to determine whether the Child Care Centers were active during the reporting period.
<i>I-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain</i>	Telephone hotline managed by ChildFund Papua New Guinea to report child welfare concerns and physical or sexual violence. The hotline was active in 2022, and staff received training from IOM staff on international legal frameworks on trafficking in persons, crisis intervention, and referrals during the reporting period. (30)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Papua New Guinea.

Research was unable to determine whether the government carried out programs specifically designed to assist children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, or mining. Research found no evidence of any programs with the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4,31)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Papua New Guinea (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2018 – 2022
	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2014 – 2022
	Accede to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for light work from age 11 to age 13 to comply with international standards and ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Raise and establish the minimum age for hazardous work from age 16 to age 18 and identify hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law does not require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances.	2016 – 2022
	Establish a law that criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2022
	Establish a law that criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law an age up to which education is compulsory that extends to age 16, the minimum age for employment.	2009 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish by law free basic public education, including fully funding education-related fees.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information on child labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, the number of labor inspectors, whether training was provided for labor inspectors, and the number of inspections conducted at worksites.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information regarding the number of child labor violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, and the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2022
	Publish information regarding whether routine inspections were conducted and targeted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2022
	Publish information regarding whether a mechanism for child labor complaints exists.	2022
	Publish information regarding the existence of a reciprocal referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services.	2022
	Establish a data monitoring system to track child labor cases.	2019 – 2022
	Establish a referral mechanism between labor and criminal law enforcement authorities and social services agencies to ensure that victims of child labor receive appropriate support services.	2014 – 2022
Employ at least 209 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 3.1 million people.	2017 – 2022	

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen the inspection system by ensuring that inspectors conduct routine and targeted inspections in addition to those that are complaint driven.	2014 – 2022
	Provide inspectors with the resources necessary to conduct inspections and enforce laws that protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including funding, training, and report writing skills.	2009 – 2022
	Institutionalize and fully fund training on the worst forms of child labor for labor inspectors and criminal investigators, including training for new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspections occur in all areas of Papua New Guinea, especially outside of urban areas.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of child labor investigations initiated, the number of child labor penalties imposed, and the number of criminal law enforcement convictions secured.	2017 – 2022
	Standardize prosecutorial and law enforcement practices to increase trust amongst survivor communities and the general public.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee is active and meets regularly to implement measures to address human trafficking; there is senior governmental leadership and participation at meetings; and all anti-human trafficking stakeholders, including NGOs, are invited to and participate in National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee coordination, per the Committee's mandate.	2021 – 2022
	Establish a coordinating mechanism to prevent and eliminate all worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that all policies are funded and implemented according to their mandate, including the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea and the National Child Protection Policy.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education by eliminating all school-related fees; increase funding for school infrastructure improvements, including essentials such as textbooks, electricity, and technology; ensure that teacher salaries are paid; address transportation challenges for students; institute programs to address gender-based violence against girls in schools; and ensure that all schools have reliable water supplies.	2014 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Implement and fully fund programs and services that assist children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in all relevant sectors, especially commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and mining.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that Child Care Centers are active, fully funded, and publish their activities undertaken during the reporting period.	2019 – 2022

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In 2022, Paraguay made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government created nine new committees to address child labor at the regional level and passed the National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence 2022–2024, which focuses government efforts to protect children and promote their rights, highlighting child labor as particular violations to the rights of children. In addition, the Public Ministry increased the number of prosecutions initiated of alleged child labor crimes from 47 in 2021 to 69 in 2022. However, children in Paraguay are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in domestic servitude and in debt bondage in cattle raising, on dairy farms, and in charcoal factories. Children with disabilities as well as those from rural and indigenous communities face difficulties accessing and completing their education. In addition, law enforcement agencies lack the funding and resources needed to sufficiently identify, investigate, and prosecute child labor crimes. Social programs also lack the funding and coverage needed to address child labor in rural areas.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Paraguay. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

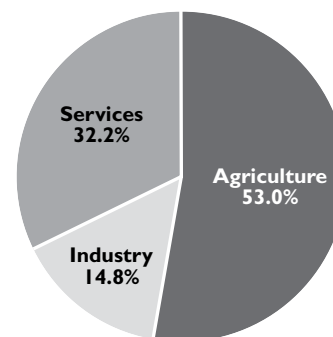
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	5.4 (36,569)
Attending School (%)	10 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		88.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Encuesta Permanente de Hogares Continua (EPHC), 2020. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of manioc/cassava, corn, beans, peanuts, peppers, sesame, sugarcane, tomatoes, lettuce, melons, sweet potato, onions, carrots, cabbages, yerba mate (stimulant plant), and charcoal (3-5)
	Raising poultry, hogs, cattle,† sheep, and goats and milk production (4)
	Fishing, including using hooks and harpoons,† preparing bait, and cleaning fish† (4)
Industry	Construction, including handling heavy loads, machinery or equipment,† and production of bricks (3,5,6-9)
	Limestone quarrying† (5,8-10)
Services	Domestic work† (3,6,8-13)
	Street work,† including vending, shoe shining, and begging (3,5,6,9,10,12-15)
	Garbage dump scavenging† (9)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Debt bondage in cattle raising, dairy farms, and charcoal factories (3,6,8,13,15,16)
	Commercial sexual exploitation (3,6,13-15,17,18)
	Forced domestic work (3,6,10,13)
	Use in the production of child pornography (3,5,6,8,10,13,15,19)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug smuggling and drug trafficking (3,6,8,10,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




Criadazgo, a practice in which middle-class and wealthy families informally employ and house child domestic workers from impoverished families, is pervasive in Paraguay. (3,6,13,15,17,18) Many of these children are in situations of domestic servitude, subjected to violence and abuse, and highly vulnerable to sex trafficking. (9,12,14,15,18) Lack of political will continues to prevent Congress from considering previously drafted legislation that would criminalize *criadazgo*, in part because of civil society concerns that a wholesale criminalization of the practice would give rise to a host of new challenges for the children involved. (6,20,21) Children are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Ciudad del Este; in the Tri-Border area between Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil; and along commercial shipping routes on the Paraguay-Parana river system. (3,6,13,15,22) In addition, the government has indicated that it is investigating allegations that children are recruited for use in forced labor in the production of marijuana in the Department of Amambay. (3,6,15) Furthermore, children work alongside their parents in debt bondage on cattle ranches, on dairy farms, and in charcoal factories in the remote Chaco region. (3,5,6,8,12,13,15)

Children from rural and indigenous communities face difficulties accessing and completing their education due to language barriers, inadequate facilities and staff, lack of identity documents, and little to no internet connectivity. (3,8,15,23) A study released in 2019 by the Coordinator for the Rights of Infancy and Adolescence of Paraguay estimated that half of all children in indigenous communities do not attend school. (24) Approximately 13 percent of children engaged in child labor in agriculture also do not attend school. (4) Indigenous children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. (18) The government has also noted that girls from rural areas leave school at an earlier age than boys and has estimated that more than 50 percent of children with disabilities could not attend school due to lack of access to public transportation. (5) Such challenges may leave these children more vulnerable to child labor.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Paraguay has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Paraguay's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of a prohibition of child recruitment by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Article 1 of Law No. 2332; Article 58 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (25,26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 54 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 3 of Decree No. 4951; Articles 122 and 125 of the Labor Code; Article 15 of the First Employment Law; Article 5 of Law No. 5407 on Domestic Work (25,27-30)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 54 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 2 of Decree No. 4951; Article 15 of the First Employment Law; Articles 122, 125, and 389 of the Labor Code; Article 5 of Law No. 5407 on Domestic Work (25-31)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 5–7 of the Comprehensive Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 125, 129, 223, and 320 of the Penal Code; Articles 10 and 54 of the Constitution (32-35)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 5, 6, and 7 of the Comprehensive Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 125, 129, and 223 of the Penal Code; Articles 10 and 54 of the Constitution (32-35)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 135 and 223 of the Penal Code; Article 2.19 of Decree No. 4951; Article 31 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (25,27,33,35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 1 of Law No. 1657; Article 32 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (25,36)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 3 and 5 of the Obligatory Military Service Law (37,38)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 3 and 5 of the Obligatory Military Service Law (37,38)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17	Article 2 of Law No. 4088; Article 32 of the General Education Law No. 1264; Decree 6162 (39-41)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 76 of the Constitution; Article 32 of the General Education Law No. 1264 (32,39)

Children in Paraguay are required to attend school only up to age 17. This standard makes children age 17 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work without restriction on hours and times of work. (25,26,39-41)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTESS)	Enforces laws related to child labor; inspects workplaces for child labor; and recommends penalties or fines for companies found in violation of labor laws. Refers cases involving criminal violations of child labor to the Ministry of Adolescents and Children (MINNA). (6)
Paraguayan National Police	Maintain a special unit of 40 police officers known as the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit, which handles trafficking in persons complaints, including in relation to children. Maintain offices in five cities across the country. (42)
Public Ministry (Attorney General)	Investigates and prosecutes criminal cases of forced child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and use of children in illicit activities. (3,15) Maintains the Specialized Unit to Combat Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. (8) Comprises 5 specialized prosecutors based in Asunción and 44 assistants. (42)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Paraguay took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTESS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$119,089 (6)	\$119,089 (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	25 (6)	23 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (43)	Yes (43)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A (6)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	1,177 (44)	1,766 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	9 (6)	15 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	13 (6)	11 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	4 (6)	5 (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (43)	Yes (43)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (3)

Research indicated that Paraguay does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties (3,45,46) Government agencies, international organizations, NGOs, and labor organizations agree that inadequate funding for resources like transportation, fuel, and necessary office facilities, as well as the insufficient number of labor inspectors, hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws, especially in the informal sector, including in agriculture and domestic work, and particularly in rural areas such as the Chaco region. (3,5,13,15) Moreover, the MTESS, other government agencies, and NGOs agree that labor inspectors receive useful and necessary training, but that inspectors could benefit from more training specific to child labor. (6,13,15) An additional constraint to labor law enforcement is the lack of efficient and timely cooperation by judicial authorities in granting workplace inspection search warrants to the Public Ministry and the MTESS when an employer does not permit an inspector to enter a workplace to conduct an inspection. (3,13,15) Research was unable to determine whether the government has implemented a 2016 agreement with judicial and law enforcement authorities that would accelerate the authorization of search warrants.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Paraguay took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of resources to sufficiently identify, investigate, and prosecute cases of the worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	N/A (6)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	170 [†] (6)	171 [‡] (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	47 (6)	69 (3)
Number of Convictions	24 (6)	Unavailable (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (6)	Unavailable (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (3)

[†] Number of investigations conducted between January and November 2021.

[‡] Number of investigations conducted between January and November 2022.

During the reporting period, investigators received several trainings on trafficking in persons as it relates to child labor, including a Spanish International Development Cooperation Agency-funded course on trafficking in persons, three EU-funded trainings on trafficking in persons, and a training funded by Partners of the Americas on assessing damages to survivors of human trafficking. (3) Paraguay also increased the number of prosecutions relating to child labor from 47 in 2021 to 69 in 2022. (3,18) Despite these efforts, government agencies, international organizations, NGOs, and labor organizations have observed a nationwide need for more specialized prosecutors to support local prosecutors and increase the Public Ministry's ability to investigate and prosecute cases involving human trafficking. (11) In addition, Paraguay's criminal law enforcement agencies lack resources like funding and fuel to sufficiently identify, investigate, and prosecute cases of the worst forms of child labor, especially in remote areas. Moreover, inconsistent application of fines and criminal penalties remain significant challenges in the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. (6,15)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including insufficient financial and human resources.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Labor	Leads government efforts against child labor and includes representatives from MTESS, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, MINNA, and other government agencies, and labor union representatives, industry associations, and NGOs. (47) The commission met four times during the reporting period to facilitate interagency communication and to refer cases to the appropriate agencies. (3) Coordination between MTESS and the Ministries of Education and Health remains insufficient to address the worst forms of child labor. (8,17)

Despite new efforts to facilitate greater coordination between agencies, interagency communication was lacking during the reporting period. (3,17) In addition, because of this inefficiency, coordination bodies have been unable to gather and report relevant data on child labor. (17) Further, coordination bodies have reported a lack of financial and human resources needed to fulfill their mission of addressing child labor. (8,17,48)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Working Adolescents (2019–2024)	Focuses on raising awareness and strengthening enforcement of child labor laws. Provides child laborers with access to free quality education and offers livelihood alternatives for their families. (8,49) In 2022, nine new Departmental Committees for the Eradication of Child Labor were created under the strategy to carry out activities at the local level. (3,50)
The National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence (2022–2024)†	Focuses the protection of children and adolescents on four main axis points: (1) strengthening the protective role of the family; (2) comprehensive protection of the rights of children and adolescents, including labor rights; (3) promotion and communication of the rights of children and adolescents; and (4) strengthening the national system's ability to protect and promote the rights of children. Each point mentioned in the plan is supplemented by a number of strategic objectives, including the expansion of protection programs linked to child labor and its worst forms, identification of high-risk situations that can lead to instances of child labor, and strengthening of health and education services. (3,51)
National Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (2020–2024)	Aims to guide government prevention, response, and protection actions and establish prosecution and penalty guidelines for trafficking in persons. Also prioritizes institutional capacity building and coordination between government entities. (15,52,53) During the reporting period, Paraguay continued to implement the national action plan by building the capacity of government officials to prevent trafficking in persons. (18)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate coverage and funding to fully address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Immediate Response Network†	Program created to provide support to street children. Under the " <i>Dispositivo de Respuesta Inmediata</i> ," MINNA employees with a range of specializations, including psychologists and social workers, respond to tips from the MINNA hotline for reporting mistreatment, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and negligence of children, as well as information from roving street patrols in high-risk areas. (3,13) During the reporting period, the Immediate Response Network continued to respond to calls into their MINNA hotline and continued to refer at risk children to the appropriate government services. (54,55)
Embrace Program (<i>Programa Abrazo</i>)†	MINNA program to assist children engaged in exploitative work by providing them and their families with health and education services, food deliveries, and cash transfers conditioned on children's school attendance and withdrawal from work. (6,8) Currently operates 53 attention centers in 12 of Paraguay's 17 departments, benefitting more than 10,000 children. (3) During the reporting period, two Embrace Program Care Centers opened in Pilar and Santa María de Fe. These centers provide vulnerable children and their families with the Embrace Program's services. (56,57) The centers had over 100 children registered for assistance at the time of opening. (56,57)
Well-Being Conditional Cash Transfer Program (<i>Tekoporā</i>)†	Government-administered program through the Ministry of Social Development. Provides conditional cash transfers to families in rural communities. (6) Incorporates aspects of the Embrace Program, such as the family monitoring methodology, to ensure that participant children do not engage in child labor. (58) During the reporting period, the Government of Paraguay announced an additional payment to existing <i>Tekoporā</i> beneficiaries. A total of 177,000 families will receive 40 percent of what they are given bimonthly for this additional payment. (59)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Paraguay.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (8,13,60,61)

In 2022, the MTESS carried out a number of awareness campaigns including the new "Child Labor Eradication" awareness campaign. (3) The Ministry of Women's Affairs also made improvements to its shelters to create a more comfortable environment for survivors of trafficking. The Ministry of Women's Affairs also updated its procedures regarding home visits to support reintegration of survivors who have left shelters. (18)

The 2012 Law Against Trafficking in Persons requires the Ministry of Women's Affairs to provide compensation and financial assistance to survivors of sex and labor trafficking, including minors, but NGO and government officials report that compensation takes too long to be helpful. (11,22,34) Although Paraguay has programs that target child labor, the coverage and funding of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, and programs are limited by the absence of government funding in education and health services in rural areas. Additional programs are needed to reach the large numbers of working children, especially in agriculture, including cattle herding, and domestic work. (5,11,15) Civil society has also stated the need for public outreach and education campaigns to provide children and their families with additional information on *criadazgo*. (21)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Paraguay (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Increase the compulsory education age from 17 years old to 18 years old to align with the minimum age for work.	2021 – 2022
	Draft and enact legislation to protect children from labor abuse under <i>criadazgo</i> , a practice in which middle-class and wealthy families informally employ and house child domestic workers from impoverished families.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 23 to 249 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 3.7 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Provide office facilities, transportation, fuel, and increased funding to the labor inspectorate, specifically in the Chaco region, to build enforcement capacity to address child labor in the informal sector, including in agriculture and domestic work.	2009 – 2022
	Implement the 2016 agreement to accelerate authorization of workplace inspection search warrants to improve the cooperation mechanisms between judicial authorities and labor enforcement officials.	2013 – 2022
	Publish information on the number of convictions achieved and penalties imposed related to child labor crimes.	2020 – 2022
	Increase efforts to prosecute crimes related to the worst forms of child labor, including by hiring and training specialized criminal investigators and prosecutors.	2012 – 2022
	Provide increased resources, such as funding and fuel for law enforcement vehicles, to enable increased criminal investigations in remote areas.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that fines and penalties for those convicted of child labor crimes are consistently applied.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Provide additional financial and human resources to all coordinating mechanisms so that they can fulfill their mandate, which includes collecting and reporting on child labor statistics and addressing child labor issues.	2018 – 2022
	Strengthen interagency coordinating mechanisms, with particular focus on the communication between the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security and the Ministries of Education and Health, to address child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education for children vulnerable to child labor, particularly children with disabilities, young girls, and children with language barriers living in rural and indigenous communities, by addressing the lack of identity documents, infrastructure, staff, internet connectivity, and transportation.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that financial assistance programs for child trafficking and forced labor survivors are properly funded.	2018 – 2022
	Further expand government programs to assist more families and children affected by child labor in agriculture in rural areas, including cattle herding, and domestic work.	2010 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2022
	Create public outreach and education campaigns to provide youth and their families with more information on <i>criadazgo</i> .	2022

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In 2022, Peru made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government added all agricultural activities to its hazardous work list for children and passed a new law, which imposed higher fines for cases of commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking. The government also trained 300 judges on child labor laws and nearly 1,500 government officials on preventing and eliminating trafficking in persons and forced labor. In addition, the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, 1930, entered into force during the reporting year. However, children in Peru are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in mining and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in the production of rice and Brazil nuts. Peruvian law allows children ages 12 to 14 to do light work without specifying the activities in which children may work. Labor law enforcement agencies in Peru still lack sufficient inspectors and training to adequately address child labor, and the government did not provide complete information on labor law and criminal enforcement efforts against child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Peru.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	18.7 (1,213,785)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	83.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	18.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		116.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Nacional de Hogares (ENAH), 2021. (2)

These data are not comparable with data presented in last year's report due to changes in survey source, survey questionnaire, or age range surveyed.

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Transplanting and harvesting rice,† and collecting and harvesting Brazil nuts/chestnuts† (3)
	Fishing† (4-8)
	Logging† timber and clearing forestland for mining, including cutting down and burning trees (4-7,9,10)
Industry	Mining† (8,11,12)
	Production of bricks† and fireworks,† construction, and metal manufacturing (5-8,10-14)
Services	Street work,† including vending, begging, shoe shining, carrying loads, selling in kiosks and markets, collecting fares on public buses,† and washing cars (4-6,8,11-13,15)
	Treating leather, repairing shoes, and tailoring (11,16)
	Repairing motor vehicles† (9)
	Garbage scavenging† (17)
	Working in restaurants, domestic work,† and cleaning offices and hotels (6,8,11-13)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in mining, including gold mining (8,9,12,13,18)
	Forced labor in logging timber, street vending, and begging (8,12,13,18)
	Forced domestic work (8,12,13,18)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, including in bars, nightclubs, brothels, and logging and mining camps, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,12)
	Growing and processing coca (stimulant plant) and transporting drugs (8,12,13,18,19)
	Counterfeiting lightbulbs (8,18,20,21)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (8,20-23)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




Children in Peru work in informal and small-scale mining, particularly for gold, sometimes in situations of forced labor, and are exposed to hazards, including mercury and harmful gases, wall and mine collapses, landslides, and explosives accidents. (5,8,9,12,13,18,24) Communities located near illegal mining operations are often isolated and lack a permanent government presence, increasing the likelihood of child trafficking and the use of children for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in bars, restaurants, and other types of service providers. (8,9,12,13,18,20,21) Girls from Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and forced labor in mining regions of Peru. (8,13,21,25) Children from indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (8) In addition, the Militarized Communist Party of Peru (MPCP), a remnant of the Shining Path terrorist group active in the Valley of the Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro rivers, continued to use children in combat, forced domestic work, and drug trafficking. (8,12,13,20-23) Some children are also subjected to forced labor in the production and trafficking of drugs and may be exposed to hazardous chemicals when processing coca or working as drug couriers. (8,12,13,18,19)

While in-person classes resumed in March 2022 and the government supported a distance learning program (*Aprendo en Casa*), problems such as limited class sizes, long distances to schools, and lack of necessary documentation such as birth certificates or passports continue to hinder education access for many children, including refugee and migrant children, and may have exacerbated their vulnerability to child labor and human trafficking. (8,26-28) While education is free, school retention of Venezuelan migrant and refugee students was often impacted by their families’ lack of economic resources and sustainable livelihoods. (8)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Peru has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

On June 18, 2022, Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, 1930, entered into force in Peru, one year after ratification. (29)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Peru's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibition of recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Articles 1, 51, 69, 70, and 73 of the Child and Adolescent Code; Articles 4 and 5 of Law No. 29981 on SUNAFIL (30,31)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1, 56-58, 69, 70, and 73 of the Child and Adolescent Code; Articles 4 and 5 of Law No. 29981 on SUNAFIL (31,32)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1 and 2 of the Supreme Decree No. 009-2022-MIMP and its Annex; Article 58 of the Child and Adolescent Code (32-34)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 23 of the Constitution; Article 4 of the Child and Adolescent Code; Article 129-O of the Penal Code (32,35,36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 4 of the Child and Adolescent Code; Articles 129-A and 129-B of the Penal Code (32,35)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 4 of the Child and Adolescent Code; Articles 129-A, 129-B, 129-H--129-J, 129-L, 129-M, 179--181-B, and 183 of the Penal Code (32,35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 46-D, 128, 296, 296-A, and 297 of the Penal Code (35)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 23 of Law No. 29248 Military Service (37)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 2 and 6 of Law No. 29248 Military Service (37)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17‡	Article 17 of the Constitution; Articles 12 and 36 of the General Education Law; Article 61 of Supreme Decree No. 011-2012-ED (36,38,39)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 17 of the Constitution; Article 4 of the General Education Law (36,38)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (36,38)

In 2022, the government issued a decree amending the Regulation to Law 28868, putting in place higher fines for tourist restaurants and travel agencies failing to take appropriate actions to prevent and report cases of children being subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. (8,40) Also during the reporting period, Peru updated its list of hazardous work for adolescents through Supreme Decree No. 009-2022-MIMP and its Annex. (33,34) This action expanded the list from agro-industrial activities, which expose children to chemicals and fumigation, to all agricultural activities. (33,34,41) However, the Child and Adolescent Code includes a light work exception for children as young as age 12 without specifying the activities or hours in which light work may be permitted. (12,30) In addition, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (32,36,38,39) Peru also lacks legislation to prohibit the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

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III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Promotion of Employment (<i>Ministerio de Trabajo y Promoción del Empleo [MTPE]</i>)	Responsible for supporting the National Labor Inspection Superintendency (<i>Superintendencia Nacional de Fiscalización Laboral [SUNAFIL]</i>), which enforces labor laws by inspecting workplaces with more than 10 registered workers and referring cases of child labor to the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (<i>Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables [MIMP]</i>) and the Public Ministry (<i>Ministerio Público - Fiscalía de la Nación or MPFN</i>), as appropriate. (4,6,42,43) SUNAFIL maintains a dedicated unit of 10 inspectors who target forced labor and child labor violations and who train other inspectors on these topics. (4,43,44) SUNAFIL has regional offices in Apurímac, Ucayali, Huancavelica, and Tacna, covering all 26 subnational entities of Peru. (6,45) Regional Directorates for Labor consist of one representative of the regional government, one representative of MTPE, and one representative of SUNAFIL. These directorates conduct inspections in workplaces with fewer than 10 registered workers. (46) The MTPE maintains an online reporting service to receive complaints of labor law violations and implements the child labor-free supply chains program "Child Labor-Free Seal" (<i>Sello Libre de Trabajo Infantil [SELTII]</i>) to help agricultural producers comply with child labor laws, including in rural agricultural zones that are difficult for the labor inspectorate to regulate. (47) During the reporting period, six different organizations were recognized with the renewal of their SELTI, which is valid for two years. (48) In November 2022, MTPE in collaboration with the ILO developed and carried out the first edition of online training called "Child Labor and Social Dialogue" for 110 people, including officials from the Regional Directive Commissions to Prevent and Eliminate Child Labor (CDRPETI) and SUNAFIL as well as representatives from worker organizations. (49,50)
Municipal Ombudsman Office for Children and Adolescents (<i>Defensoría Municipal del Niño y del Adolescente [DEMUNA]</i>)	Under the umbrella of the MIMP, the 1,890 local offices, including 459 accredited offices, are led by an ombudsman that coordinates government policies and programs that aim to protect and promote the rights of children and adolescents. (51) Each of the offices work collaboratively with the MTPE and local municipal officials, including police, using the Municipal Model for the Detection and Eradication of Child Labor (<i>Modelo de Identificación del Riesgo de Trabajo Infantil or MIRTI</i>) referral protocol to ensure adolescents who are removed from hazardous work receive appropriate social services. (47,52)
Ministry of the Interior (<i>Ministerio del Interior [MININTER]</i>)	Investigates child trafficking cases and maintains a hotline to receive reports of human trafficking. (14) Provides survivors and the public with information on human trafficking, refers cases of human trafficking to relevant government offices, and coordinates services for survivors. (14) Within MININTER, the Peruvian National Police enforces criminal laws regarding child labor and child exploitation and maintains the Office to Address Human Trafficking and Illicit Migrant Smuggling (<i>Dirección Contra la Trata de Personas y Tráfico Ilícito de Migrantes [DIRCTPIM]</i>) which investigates cases of child trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation. (53,54) Coordinates with MPFN and MIMP to place survivors with family members or state social services. (4,55) DIRCTPIM has approximately 150 investigators. (5) Municipal police also use MIRTI to work collaboratively with DEMUNA to remove children and adolescents from hazardous work. (47) MININTER launched a national awareness raising campaign for the National and World Day Against Trafficking in Persons that reached over 6,000 people at local fairs. (49) MPFN coordinates with MTPE, SUNAFIL, and PNP to investigate and prosecute criminal violations of child labor laws. Maintains a specialized human trafficking prosecutorial unit in the National Prosecutor's Office which operated in 14 out of 25 regions in 2022. (6,8)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Peru took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Promotion of Employment (MTPE) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$47,000,000 (12)	\$49,000,000 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	822 (12)	787 (56)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (31)	Yes (31)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	629 (12)	Unknown

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	34 (12,21)	56 (8,21)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	50 (12)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (12)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (58)	Yes (58)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (12)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (8)

Research indicates that Peru does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (59-61) In addition, many of Peru's inspectors are "auxiliary" or junior-level inspectors with limited authority to conduct inspections until they complete 2 years of service and an examination. Auxiliary inspectors must have tenured inspectors supervise their inspection processes and review their inspection acts for any businesses with more than 10 employees. (57,62) Funding also remains inadequate to carry out sufficient inspections and maintain facilities, and enforcement in the informal sector, in which many child laborers are found, is also insufficient. (12,63) In addition, the National Labor Inspection Superintendency (SUNAFIL) prohibits inspectors from conducting routine inspections of any given worksite on the same subject or issue within the same year. (12,64) Civil society and labor sector experts reported that training for SUNAFIL's labor inspectors is inadequate as inspectors are in need of more training on labor law compliance, and trainings do not occur frequently enough and are limited outside of Lima. (6,57)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Peru took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (8)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (65-67)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (8)

In August 2022, more than 300 judges took the second edition of the online course called "Legal Framework, Regulations, and Actions to Combat Child Labor" and nearly 1,500 government officials received training on preventing and eliminating human trafficking and forced labor. (49) Through the U.S.-Peru Child Protection Compact Partnership, the United States and Peru provided support to seven shelters in Peru for child victims of human trafficking. (57) Despite these efforts, there is an insufficient number of shelters for survivors of the worst forms of child labor throughout the country, including shelters to serve boys, and a lack of specialized services for survivors of human trafficking. (13,24,55,68,69) Research has indicated that investigations and prosecutions were inadequate to deter child trafficking, particularly in illegal mining areas and bars. Moreover, reports noted too few investigators, insufficient funding or resources to carry out investigations, low conviction rates, and inadequate training for MTPE investigators, police, and members of the judicial system. (8,10,12,14,20,24,68)

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IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Multisectoral Permanent Commission for the Follow-up to the Implementation of the Multisectoral Policy for Children towards 2030*	Launched on January 28, 2022, and created by Presidential Decree No. 001-2022-MIMP, the Multisectoral Commission is led by the MIMP, through its Vice Ministry for Vulnerable Populations (Chair) and Directorate-General for Children (Secretariat). It comprises 22 government officials from 16 different agencies— including the Ministries of Labor, Interior, and Education, as well as nine entities from other levels of government— and invites public-private partnerships, civil society, and international cooperation actors to participate on an ad hoc basis. (8,70) Its three main duties are: a) follow-up of the Multisectoral Policy for Children towards 2030; b) publish reports on urgent measures to be adopted by service providers; and c) issue an annual technical report. (70) Although some regional commissions under CDRPETI created action plans to address child labor as required by their operating rules, research could not confirm whether all Regional Commissions had done so during the reporting period. Additionally, most Regional Commissions lacked the funding to carry out these action plans. (49)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Multisectoral National Policy for Children towards 2030 (PNMNNA)†	Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by improving livelihoods of low-income families, providing better working conditions for adolescents, raising awareness of child labor, and increasing child labor law enforcement. (4,15) Also seeks to improve the quality of child labor data in Peru. (15) Through ministerial resolution number 292-2022-TR, on November 7, 2022 the government developed the Multisectoral National Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor, which reportedly covers the time period of 2022–2030. (71)
National Plan to Combat Forced Labor (2019–2022)	Established policies and plans to reduce forced labor. (72) In 2022, the government released a toolkit to help providers refer children and adult survivors of forced labor to relevant information and services at the regional level. (73) The Regional Directorates for Labor and Employment Promotion also incorporated forced labor prevention measures into their regional or local plans, and approved a new project to assist human trafficking survivors to access jobs. (49)
National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons and its Forms of Exploitation (2022–2030)	Serves as the roadmap to prevent, control, reduce, and prosecute human trafficking crimes at all levels. (13) MININTER is the lead on all efforts and the plan focuses on expanding preventative monitoring; improving inspection, prosecution, and criminal sanction systems; and strengthening attention to and reintegration of survivors. (74) Under this policy, the government operates seven specialized shelters exclusively for girls exploited in sex trafficking in the regions of Cusco, Lima, Loreto, Madre de Dios, and Puno with a capacity for approximately 120 survivors. (21)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequacy of efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Secondary Tutorial Program†	Rural basic education program supported by the Ministry of Education that includes school meal plans (<i>Qali Warma</i>) for rural students throughout the country, including hard-to-reach indigenous communities. (47) The government continued to implement the program during the reporting period. (21)
Learn Program (<i>Yachay</i>)†	MIMP program to increase access to social services for children subjected to street work, begging, and commercial sexual exploitation. The Street Educators (<i>Educadores de Calle</i>)† program is part of the broader <i>Yachay</i> Program and provides counseling and training to children engaged in child labor, begging, and street work. (4,75) Operates 71 centers at the national level for educational activities, parent training, and workshops. (4,75) Connects working children and their families to educational and social services to withdraw them from exploitative work and improve family welfare. (5,75-77) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period.
Together Program (<i>Juntos</i>)†	Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion program that provides cash transfers to low-income households in 15 of the country's 25 regions. (4,78) The government continued to implement the program during the reporting period. (21)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Peru.

Reports indicate that existing social programs are not sufficient to fully address the problem of child labor in Peru, including the large number of children who perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Peru also lacks targeted programs to assist children who are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and children who work in mining, logging, and domestic work. (8,20)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Peru (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 17 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Establish a law criminally prohibiting the recruitment of children younger than age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that light work provisions determine the activities and the number of hours per week in which light work may be permitted.	2017 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on child labor violations found for which penalties were imposed, whether they were collected, and the number of labor inspections conducted at worksite.	2015 – 2022
	Increase funding and resources for labor and criminal law enforcement agencies.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure adequate enforcement of child labor laws, including in the informal sector.	2009 – 2022
	Increase training for enforcement personnel on child labor and forced labor issues.	2019 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 787 to about 1,247 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 18.7 million people.	2019 – 2022
	Remove the "auxiliary inspector classification" to increase efficiency in the labor inspection process and allow inspectors to conduct follow-up inspections at any time.	2017 – 2022
	Publish information on training for criminal investigators, the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, and convictions.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officials conduct adequate investigations in mining areas and bars and initiate prosecutions when violations are found to deter perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that there are sufficient shelters, including shelters for boys, and specialized services available for survivors of human trafficking.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that Regional Commissions for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor develop action plans to address child labor and allocate sufficient funding to implement these plans.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that key coordinating bodies related to the worst forms of child labor are active, publish information on annual activities, and carry out their mandates.	2020 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to make education accessible for all children, including migrant and refugee children, by addressing barriers such as limited class sizes, long distances to schools, and lack of necessary documentation.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information on activities taken under all social programs that address child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Expand social programs to reach a greater number of children who perform dangerous tasks in agriculture; initiate social programs to address child commercial sexual exploitation, child labor in mining, child labor in logging, and child domestic work.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, the Philippines made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government enacted the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act to hold private sector entities responsible for addressing human trafficking. It also enacted the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials Act, which, among other things, punishes perpetrators of online sexual abuse of children and provides penalties for the production, distribution, possession, and provision of access to child sexual abuse or exploitation materials. In addition, the government launched a plan to improve the quality and delivery of education, address access gaps, and build resilience of learners. However, children in the Philippines are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and gold mining. The minimum age for work of 15 is lower than the compulsory education age of 18, making children ages 15 through 17 vulnerable to child labor. Social programs also do not sufficiently support child victims of online sexual exploitation, and enforcement of child labor laws remains a challenge throughout the country due to limited personnel and financial resources.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in the Philippines.

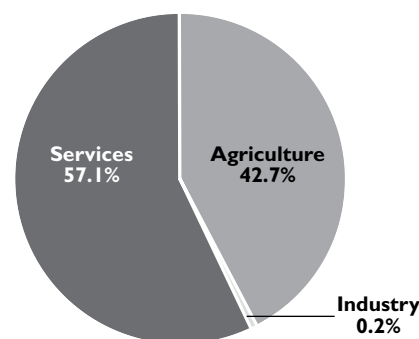
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	1.9 (458,631)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	2.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2021. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of sugarcane,† including growing, weeding,† harvesting,† cutting,† and carrying sugarcane bundles† (3,4)
	Growing bananas, coconuts, corn, rice, rubber, and tobacco (4-6)
	Hog farming (7,8)
	Deep-sea fishing† (4,9)
Industry	Mining† and quarrying,† including for gold (3,4,10)
	Manufacturing pyrotechnics† (4,9)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Construction,† activities unknown (4,9)
	Production of fashion accessories (3,4)
Services	Domestic work (3,4,11,12)
	Street work, including scavenging, selling flowers, and begging (3,9,13,14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,13-17)
	Forced labor, including domestic work (3,4,17,18)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (3,19,20)
	Forced begging (3,9,13)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (14)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Philippine children are victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC), in which children perform sex acts at the direction of paying foreigners and local Filipinos for live internet broadcasts that take place in small internet cafes, private homes, or windowless buildings sometimes referred to as “cybersex dens.” (3,12,17,18,21-26) The sector is highly profitable and growing due to increasing internet connectivity, widespread English language literacy, gaps in existing legislation and financial systems, and high international demand. (26) According to the latest available information published in 2021, 20 percent of internet-using children between the ages of 12 and 17 in the Philippines have been subjected to OSAEC. (14,18,25-27) Children from rural communities, primarily girls, are also subjected to trafficking domestically in urban centers and tourist destinations for the purposes of domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. (4,18,21) Children in disaster-affected areas are targeted for sex trafficking, domestic servitude, and other forms of forced labor. As the Philippines is vulnerable to natural disasters including typhoons, tsunamis, volcanic activity, droughts, and erosion—and models indicate that the frequency and scale of these disasters will escalate in the coming years—an increasing number of children may be exposed to child labor. (26,28,29) In addition, perpetrators of child trafficking use student and intern exchange programs, use fake childcare positions, and take advantage of porous maritime borders to facilitate the exploitation of children. (21)




The recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups, primarily the New People's Army and Dawla Islamiyah, remains a concern in the country. These children are used in both combat and non-combat roles, including as supply officers, medics, and cooks, and for running errands. (14,30,31) In addition, the Islamic State's affiliated groups reportedly have subjected women and girls to sexual slavery. (21) Despite the new administration's commitment to rehabilitate drug users and address the root causes of drug abuse in the country, lethal clashes between civilians and law enforcement officials continue, which resulted in the death of 14 children during the last 6 months of the reporting period. (14,32) Children are used in drug trafficking as pushers, possessors, employees at “drug dens,” and cultivators. (14)

Although the Constitution establishes free, compulsory education through age 18, unofficial school-related fees, such as for school uniforms, are prohibitive for some families. Other barriers to education include substandard infrastructure, which makes traveling and access to schools challenging, especially for children in rural areas, and architectural barriers that pose challenges for children with disabilities. (24)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Philippines has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the Philippines' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a minimum age for work that is below the compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 137 of the Labor Code; Section 12 of the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Section 16 of the Act Instituting Policies for the Protection and Welfare of Domestic Workers (33-36)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 137 of the Labor Code; Section 12-D of the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (34-36)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Department Orders 149 and 149A on Guidelines in Assessing and Determining Hazardous Work in the Employment of Persons Below 18 Years of Age; Sections 12-D and 14 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (9,35-38)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 4 and 5 of the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (35,36,39)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 3a, 4(k), 5, and 10 of the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (35,36,39,40)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 11 of the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Section 4 of the Cybercrime Prevention Act; Sections 4 and 10 of the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials Act. (35,36,41-43)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Sections 5 and 8 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act (35,36,44)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 12 of the Providing for the Development, Administration, Organization, Training, Maintenance and Utilization of the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes Act (45)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Section 14 of the Providing for the Development, Administration, Organization, Training, Maintenance and Utilization of the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes Act (45)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (36)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Section 4 of the Enhanced Basic Education Act (46)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 2 of the Philippine Constitution (47)

* Country has no conscription (45)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (46,48)

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In 2022, the government enacted the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2022, which imposes requirements and responsibilities on a multitude of private sector entities—including internet intermediaries, tourism enterprises, and financial intermediaries—to address and prevent trafficking in persons, including children. The act also identifies penalties for private sector entities if they are found in violation of the requirements. (14,40) Additionally, the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials Act became law during the reporting period. This act provides additional protection for children against digital sexual abuse and exploitation. (14,43,49,50) As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age in the Philippines, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (24,33-35,46)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)	Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) manages the labor inspection program that oversees inspections conducted by DOLE regional offices nationwide. BWC also oversees training of labor inspectors, manages the DOLE Labor Inspection Management Information System, and responds to queries and complaints regarding labor standards and working conditions, including tips on potential child labor cases, received through the DOLE 1349 hotline. (4,51) Inspects establishments and monitors compliance with labor laws in the formal sector. (52) Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC) oversees the Profiling Child Laborers Initiative, a program to identify child laborers and remove them from child labor situations. (3,53) Mandated to develop policies, programs, and systems that champion the development and protection of disadvantaged workers by contributing to their decent and productive employment. Provides advisory and technical assistance to the Labor Secretary and regional offices. (54) Also oversees the Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams (<i>Sagip Batang Manggagawa</i>) that detect, monitor, and rescue child laborers in hazardous conditions. (4,9,13,51,52) During the reporting year, DOLE held events to raise awareness of child labor, including for the annual World Day Against Child Labor. (50)
Criminal Law Enforcement Agencies: Philippine National Police (PNP), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)	PNP investigates and prosecutes cases related to the worst forms of child labor. (4,13) Its Women and Children's Protection Center (WCPC) enforces laws on child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children and has 269 personnel nationwide. (18) NBI investigates and prosecutes child labor cases and operates a national Task Force on the Protection of Children from Exploitation and Abuse. (9,18) Oversees the Anti-Human Trafficking Division, which investigates trafficking and illegal recruitment of children nationwide. (17) PDEA enforces the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, maintains a national hotline for reporting cases of children used in illicit activities, and coordinates with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to assist during rescue operations. (9,13)
Cybersecurity Law Enforcement Agencies: National Telecommunications Commission, Dept. of Justice–Office of Cybercrime, Philippines Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC), Dept. of Information and Communication Technology–Cybersecurity Bureau	National Telecommunications Commission enforces the Anti-Child Pornography Law. Coordinates with internet service providers to block websites containing pornographic material involving children. (25,49) Department of Justice–Office of Cybercrime receives CyberTips reports from the U.S.-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children regarding potential OSAEC cases, conducts initial investigation into CyberTips, prioritizes cases, and then sends cases to PNP's Internet Crime Against Children Center for follow up. (55) Comprises legal and investigative divisions. (55) PICACC aims to combat the online sexual exploitation of children. Comprises the PNP-WCPC Anti-Human Trafficking Division and NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division and aims to coordinate WCPC and NBI investigation of internet crimes against children. (18,56,57) Coordinates international investigations with the United Kingdom's National Crimes Agency (UK NCA) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP). (16,17,57,58) Receives funding from the UK NCA, AFP, and the U.S. Government. (59,60) Department of Information and Communication Technology–Cybersecurity Bureau provides preventative technological assistance to law enforcement and protects cybersecurity of Filipino citizens. (61) Oversees an anti-OSEC program comprising awareness-raising programs, computer software, website monitoring, cybersecurity, and a visible internet application, a form of artificial intelligence that allows for remote screen access. Shows an educational anti-OSAEC video in local communities, in collaboration with the Philippines Online Corporation. (61) Consults with telecommunications companies and civil society organizations to produce the National Cybersecurity Strategy. (42,61,62) Oversees CyberSafePH, an awareness campaign and capacity-building program with a 3-year roadmap aimed at addressing OSAEC and cyberbullying. (17,21,63) Reporting indicates that all of the aforementioned bodies were active in combatting child labor during the reporting period. (64) In 2022, PICACC successfully conducted 26 anti-trafficking in persons (OSAEC) operations that resulted in the rescue of 60 victims, arrest of 9 suspected traffickers, initiation of 19 prosecutions, and conviction of 5 suspects. (50)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in the Philippines took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation to the labor law inspectorate.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3,657,520 (4)	\$3,700,000 (14)
Number of Labor Inspectors	1,210 (4)	1,210 (14)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (34)	No (34)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (14)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	58,363 (4)	81,314 (14)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	5 (4,65)	5 (14)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (4)	0 (14)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	N/A (14)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (14)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (14)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (34)	Yes (34)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (14)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (14)

Research indicates that the Philippines does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (14,66,67) A lack of funding, equipment, and data further prevents the labor inspectorate from conducting inspections in all provinces and in the informal sector. (14) The Bureau of Working Conditions acknowledged that more specialized training on child labor is needed to enhance labor inspectors' ability to readily identify and act on child labor situations. (3,13)

Enforcement of child labor protections for children employed in the informal sector and in small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in agriculture and fishing, falls to DOLE, which has in the past lacked financial and human resources. (3,9,13,18,24) The Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams are permitted to conduct unannounced compliance visits to video karaoke bars, massage parlors, saunas and bathhouses, and farms, but they are not authorized to conduct visits to private homes to search for underage child domestic workers. However, there are mechanisms available to *barangay* (neighborhood level) officials to permit them to investigate domestic work-related complaints. (3,9,13,14,64)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Philippines took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the Philippine judicial system that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inefficiencies in court proceedings, which prevent victims from obtaining justice and restitution.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (14)
Number of Investigations	93 (4)	122 (14)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	70 (4)	105 (14)
Number of Convictions	53 (4)	69 (14)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (4)	Yes (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (14)

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The Philippine National Police continued to refer children involved in drug trafficking to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), after which they were placed in either juvenile detention centers or Houses of Hope, which, in practice, closely resemble detention centers. (9,24,68) In 2022, police killed a 17-year old suspect after he allegedly drew a weapon during a buy-bust police operation. (69,70) The Department of Justice claimed that it would review over 6,000 killings committed during drug war-related police operations, but the process has been slow and ineffective, with only 52 cases filed in the courts and only 5 convictions of offending police officers. (64)

During the reporting period, officials from law enforcement, courts, and other parts of the government participated in trainings related to OSAEC and trafficking in persons. (14) Philippine law allows judges to award civil compensation to human trafficking survivors based on damages arising from being trafficked, but survivors rarely receive this restitution since perpetrators often lack sufficient assets to pay. However, in cases for which perpetrators are financially able to pay this penalty, many are able to evade doing so due to ineffective, slow court procedures. (18,28,64) Due to the high volume of cybercrime tips related to child sexual exploitation received by the Office of Cybercrime each month, there is the need for additional law enforcement personnel, funds for operations, and equipment for forensic analysis of digital evidence. (24,28) Slow-moving courts, the need for additional training on handling digital evidence, a lack of understanding regarding application of the legal framework to cases, and too few prosecutors also hindered the effective and timely prosecution of human trafficking crimes. (12,18,22,28) Law enforcement agencies raised concerns about a lack of resources, including staff and a centralized database for tracking illegal recruitment and human trafficking. This lack of resources impedes their ability to act quickly on complaints of child labor, including those involving OSAEC, through conducting investigations and initiating prosecutions. (17,28,64)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Council Against Child Labor (NCACL)	Chaired by DOLE and co-chaired by DSWD. (14,71-74) Membership includes 19 government agencies and organizations. (4,72) Coordinates national efforts to combat child labor and implements the Philippine Program Against Child Labor. (14,74,75) Promotes information sharing at the national, regional, and provincial levels, and is tasked with establishing and disseminating a child labor reporting mechanism for use by local and national authorities. (3,17) During the reporting period, NCACL held 4 regular meetings and its technical working groups held 20 meetings. The council discussed the proposed assessment of the Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework, the redevelopment of Child Labor Knowledge Sharing System website, approved the resolution Urging Council Members to Accelerate the Provision of Necessary Services to Profiled Child Laborers, and approved a resolution supporting the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labor. (14)

During the reporting period, the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking established the National Coordination Center Against OSAEC under the DSWD. The center will develop and implement programs to prevent children from being victimized by online and commercial sexual exploitation, and to provide protective services to and reintegrate into society survivors of the crime. (14,50)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework (2020–2022)	Aimed to gradually reduce child labor through consultations with government institutions, local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, faith-based groups, professional associations, academia, the private sector, parents, and children. (9,13,83) Implementation of the framework was led by the NCACL with DOLE serving as Chairperson and DOLE's BWSC and BWC as Joint Secretariat. (14) During the reporting period, stakeholders conducted an assessment of the plan and developed recommendations for implementation of the policy. Additionally, stakeholders proposed a Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework for 2023–2028. (14,84)
Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) (2022–2030)†	Functions as a strategic roadmap to improve the government's delivery and quality of basic education. Aims to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning, participation in learning, access gaps, education quality, and resilience and rights of learners. (14,48) Implemented and assessed by the Department of Education. Each level of governance (school, division, region, and national) will formulate their own basic education policies that will work to meet the goals of the BEDP. Department of Education's planning offices review the policies and plans of each governance level to ensure congruency with the national plan. (14,48)
Anti-Trafficking Policies: National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2023–2027)†	Approved to replace the Third National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons during the reporting period. Provides an overall direction for the Philippines to address labor trafficking and sex trafficking, including online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Justice and co-chaired by the Secretary of DSWD. Employs a multi-stakeholder approach to fight human trafficking. (14) Mandated to prevent and suppress human trafficking, and ensure victim recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society through four key result areas: (1) Prevention, (2) Protection and Reintegration, (3) Prosecution and Law Enforcement, and (4) Partnership and Networking. (14,85)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (38,92,93)

During the reporting period, the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking completed an assessment of the Third National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking, which the council utilized to finalize the fourth strategic action plan. (14)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including a lack of adequate services for survivors of OSAEC.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Anti-Child Labor Programs: Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program,† Livelihood for Parents of Child Laborers (<i>Kabuhayan para sa Magulang ng Batang Manggagawa</i>),† and <i>Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino</i> Program (Conditional Cash Transfer Program)	<p>The Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program is a DOLE anti-child labor program that implements local awareness-raising campaigns, institutes child labor-monitoring mechanisms, and requires neighborhoods to develop child labor elimination plans. (9) Includes a provision of livelihood assistance to parents of child laborers, <i>Sagip Batang Manggagawa</i>, and Project Angel Tree. (9,76) The government increased the program's budget by 30 percent during the reporting period. (14)</p> <p>Project Angel Tree is a social service with local government agency benefactors, known as "angels," who provide educational supplies to communities. (53,94) The program conducted 96 gift-giving activities during the reporting period. (14)</p> <p>Livelihood for Parents of Child Laborers is a DOLE program that provides livelihood assistance to parents, guardians, or other family members of child laborers. Seeks to prevent and eliminate child labor by providing necessary materials to start a livelihood undertaking. (4) During the reporting period, the program provided 5,512 parents of child laborers with livelihood assistance. (14)</p> <p>Conditional Cash Transfer Program is a DSWD national poverty reduction program that provides conditional grants, local awareness-raising campaigns, and child labor-monitoring mechanisms to assist poor families with children's access to health care, adequate nutrition, and education. (3,9,18,95) Includes a child labor module on family development for program participants. (9,96) Covers 1,627 cities and municipalities in 79 provinces in all 17 regions. (3,9) During the reporting period, the program published a third quarter report on its progress. (64)</p>

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
Strategic Helpdesks for Information, Education, Livelihood and Other Developmental Interventions for Child Laborers (SHIELD Against Child Labor)†	DSWD-led project implemented in 14 barangays in Catanauan, Labo, Jose Panganiban, Paracale, Kananga, and Ormoc City, with support from the ILO CARING Gold Mining Project. (51,53) Comprises three components: Child Labor Local Registry; Helpdesk and Convergence of Services; and Advocacy, Organizing, and Capacity Building. (9,97) Focuses on areas with a high child labor incidence rate, with interventions based on data from the Child Labor Local Registry. (97) Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in the small-scale gold mining, deep sea fishing, and sugarcane industries. (3,9,75,98) During reporting year, recorded and addressed 1,400 cases of child laborers.
Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP)†	RRPTP is a DSWD and Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking program that provides recovery and reintegration services to survivors of human trafficking and raises awareness in vulnerable communities. Includes the National Referral System, which strengthens coordination among agencies providing services to human trafficking victims using standard referral and reporting forms. (18,99) During the reporting period, RRPTP conducted trainings on trauma-informed care and gender-responsive case management. The program also developed the Implementing Rules and Regulations for the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. (14)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of the Philippines.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (106,107)

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) continued to coordinate with DSWD when dealing with children allegedly involved in drug trafficking. From July 2016 to October 2022, Philippine law enforcement arrested 4,679 minors. (4,14) PDEA policy is to turn children over within 8 hours of their arrest to "Houses of Hope" (*Bahay ng Pag-asa*), which are rehabilitation and skills training centers for children in trouble with the law. (4,14,108) Previous reports indicate that although there is an accreditation process for these facilities administered by the federal Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council, only a small number of Houses of Hope have met the qualifications, which allows for corruption, maltreatment of residents, and failure to provide quality rehabilitative services. Research from previous years showed that many Houses of Hope essentially operated as youth detention centers, in which some children were subjected to physical and emotional abuse, deprived of liberty, and forced into overcrowded and unhygienic cells. (24,51,108,109) According to the Juvenile Justice Welfare Council, council employees regularly visited the centers during the reporting period to ensure compliance with set standards. Their reports note inadequate food and clothing, inadequate staffing, limited programs and services, prolonged stays in the center, typhoon damage, and absence of psychologists in the centers. (14)

DSWD works in consultation with parents and community leaders to determine how best to assist children suspected of being involved in the drug trade; however, DSWD does not have programs specifically designed to increase protections for or assistance to children engaged in drug trafficking. DSWD also lacks programming to address the heightened vulnerability of children impacted by the death of familial breadwinners in the drug war. (9,110) In addition, although some specialized resources exist to assist victims of human trafficking, the Philippines lacked sufficient programs to care for and rehabilitate children who have been victims of OSAEC. (25)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the Philippines (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 18 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase funding to allow for the hiring of more law enforcement personnel, including police and prosecutors, training for forensic analysis of digital online sexual exploitation of children evidence, and creation of a centralized database to allow for quicker action on cases involving the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.	2015 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 1,210 to 2,834 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 42.5 million people, and increase resources available to provide sufficient coverage of the workforce, particularly in the informal sector and in rural areas where child labor is prevalent.	2014 – 2022
	Develop and provide specialized training for labor inspectors on identification of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Allow Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams to conduct unannounced compliance visits to private homes to ensure that there are no child domestic workers being illegally employed.	2018 – 2022
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2015 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to prevent the inappropriate incarceration of, and violence against, children suspected to be engaged in the production and trafficking of drugs and those caught in the crossfire during anti-drug operations.	2017 – 2022
	Prosecute law enforcement officials and civilians responsible for the killing of children engaged in the drug trade and officials who are complicit in trafficking.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that youth rehabilitation centers, including Houses of Hope (<i>Bahay ng Pag-asa</i>), are accredited and in compliance with standards set by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council.	2020 – 2022
	Provide criminal law enforcement officials training on laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including the proper handling of digital evidence in criminal trials.	2020 – 2022
	Prosecute trafficking crimes in a timely manner and hire more criminal prosecutors to lessen the workload.	2020 – 2022
	Develop procedures to allow for the efficient collection of restitution from convicted human traffickers and its transfer to their victims.	2020 – 2022
	Social Programs	Increase access to free, compulsory education by eliminating unofficial school-related fees and addressing issues related to inadequate school infrastructure, including architectural barriers.
Develop programs to increase protections for and provide assistance to children engaged in drug trafficking and children impacted by the death of a familial breadwinner to address their heightened vulnerability to child labor.		2017 – 2022
Ensure that Houses of Hope (<i>Bahay ng Pag-asa</i>) child detention centers in the Philippines do not subject children to physical or emotional abuse, that those who commit such crimes are held accountable, and that centers are provided with adequate resources to remedy overcrowding and unhygienic conditions.		2017 – 2022

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In 2022, Rwanda made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government significantly increased labor inspectorate funding and conducted awareness-raising campaigns aimed at ending child labor, child abuse, and addressing human trafficking. However, children in Rwanda are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in informal mining, including carrying heavy loads. Reports indicate that children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and forced street begging have been detained by government officials in transit centers intended for individuals demonstrating so-called deviant behaviors, where they often experience physical abuse. In addition, inadequate resource allocation for the labor inspectorate, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors, may impede government efforts to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. Finally, social programs do not address all relevant sectors in which child labor is present.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Rwanda.

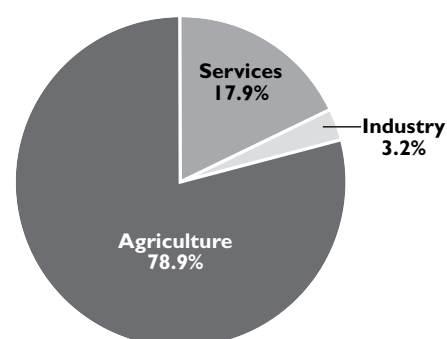
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	6 to 14	5.4 (156,522)
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	89.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		91.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV-5), 2016–2017. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 6-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of sugarcane, rice, bananas, beans, coffee, manioc, pineapples, and potatoes, including carrying heavy loads† and wielding machetes (3,4)
	Production of tea, including applying fertilizers,† carrying heavy loads,† planting, plucking tea leaves, and weeding (3,5,6)
	Fishing† (7)
	Herding cattle and caring for pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens (3,8)
	Forestry activities (9)
Industry	Construction,† including laying and making bricks (3,10)
	Mining† tantalum ore (coltan) and quarrying (3,11-13)
	Producing charcoal (3)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work† (3,10,13)
	Repair of motorcycles and motor vehicles (12,13)
	Street work, including collecting scrap metal,† lifting and transporting heavy loads,† begging, and vending (3,10,13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (10,13,14)
	Forced labor in agricultural work, mining, domestic work, and begging (8,14)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Rwanda is a source and transit country for child trafficking victims, primarily those from Rwanda and neighboring countries en route to exploitation in Saudi Arabia, Uganda, Kenya, and elsewhere in East Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia. (8,15-17) Within Rwanda, young girls are forced into domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation, and boys are exploited in forced labor in the agricultural and industrial sectors, including on plantations and in mines. (14,16-19) Children between ages 13 and 18 are often exploited in sex trafficking in hotels, at times with the cooperation of hotel owners. Reports indicate an increase in domestic human trafficking, possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on cross-border travel. Homeless and orphaned children, children with disabilities, and girls are at particular risk of being exploited in human trafficking. (14)

The government identified street begging as a growing problem in the country, noting that some families were renting out their children to individuals who would collect earnings from the children and pay a percentage to the families. (6,8,15) The closure of schools due to the pandemic may have contributed to an increase in forced begging, and children who begged typically worked almost 11 hours per day and were at risk of not returning to school. (6,15) National data show that approximately 3.6 percent of all children in Rwanda are engaged in child labor, primarily in the agriculture and services sectors. (7,20) In a survey of working children between ages 5 and 17 from 11 districts in the country, Rwanda’s National Commission for Human Rights reported in 2020 that more than half of the respondents indicated that they performed some type of hazardous labor, including carrying heavy loads and working in construction, brick kilns, and informal mining. (6,21) Officials also indicated that children living in mining communities often drop out of school and work in abandoned artisanal mines with their parents. (6,22) Poverty was identified as the key factor contributing to child labor, which in turn led to an increased incidence of children dropping out of school. (6,21)

Although the Ministry of Education established a policy that provides free basic education for 12 years, of which the first 9 are compulsory, in practice, the costs of uniforms, school supplies, and unofficial school fees may preclude some families from sending their children to school. (20,22,23) Furthermore, children with disabilities face particular difficulties accessing education due to stigma and because schools lack the capacity to accommodate special needs. (6,15,22,23)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Rwanda has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor




Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor (Cont.)

Convention	Ratification
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Rwanda's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of free public education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 5 of the Labor Law; Articles 2, 3, and 7–9 of the Ministerial Instruction Relating to Prevention and Fight Against Child Labor (24,25)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 6 of the Labor Law (24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 6 of the Labor Law; Articles 4–6 of the Ministerial Order Determining the List of Worst Forms of Child Labor; Kigali City Guidelines 2012-02; Articles 7–9 of the Ministerial Instruction Relating to the Prevention and Fight against Child Labor (24-27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 3.25 and 7 of the Labor Law; Article 178 of the Penal Code; Article 51 of the Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child; Article 9 of the Ministerial Instruction Relating to Prevention and Fight against Child Labor (24,25,28,29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, and 18–20 of the Law on Prevention, Suppression, and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons; Article 28 of the Law on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence; Articles 225, 251, and 259–262 of the Penal Code; Article 51 of the Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child; Article 31 of the Law Relating to the Protection of the Child; Article 9 of the Ministerial Instruction Relating to Prevention and Fight against Child Labor (25,28-32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 3.2 and 24 of the Law on Prevention, Suppression, and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons; Articles 190, 211, and 260 of the Penal Code; Article 51 of the Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child; Articles 34 and 35 of the Law Relating to the Protection of the Child; Article 9 of the Ministerial Instruction Relating to Prevention and Fight against Child Labor (25,28,29,31,32)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 220 of the Penal Code; Article 51 of the Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child; Article 9 of the Ministerial Instruction Relating to Prevention and Fight against Child Labor; Article 263 of the Law Determining Offenses and Penalties in General (25,28,29,33)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 5 of Presidential Order 72/01 Establishing Army General Statutes; Article 7 of Presidential Order 32/01 Establishing Rwanda Defense Forces Special Statute; Article 50 of the Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child (28,34,35)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 5 of Presidential Order 72/01 Establishing Army General Statutes; Articles 99(8) and 100(2) of the Law Determining Offenses and Penalties in General (33,34)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 221 of the Penal Code (29)
Compulsory Education Age	No	12	Article 47 of the Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child; Articles 55–58 of the Law Determining the Organization of Education (28,36)
Free Public Education	No		Article 47 of the Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child; Articles 55–58 of the Law Determining the Organization of Education (28,36)

* Country has no conscription (28,34,35)

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Although Rwanda has adopted policies, separate from the 2020 Law Determining the Organization of Education, to implement fee-free 12 years of basic education and compulsory education through age 15, the national education law stipulates that primary education is free and compulsory only through the first 6 years of schooling and states that education is compulsory only up to age 12. (20,36,37) The national education law also establishes English as the primary language of instruction, which may create a barrier to education for children whose first language is not English. (36) Furthermore, the age up to which education is compulsory makes children between ages 12 and 15 vulnerable to child labor because they are not legally required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Public Service and Labor (MIFOTRA)	Enforces labor laws, including laws on child labor, in coordination with other government entities at the national and district level. (22) In partnership with the Ministry of Education, reintegrates children withdrawn from child labor with their families and enrolls them in school. Mobilizes other ministries and agencies providing social services, including the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the National Child Development Agency, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Local Government, to take an active role in child labor law enforcement. (6,38)
Ministry of the Interior	Oversees the Rwandan National Police, the Rwandan Investigation Bureau, and the National Public Prosecution Authority. (10) The Rwandan National Police enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor through its Child Protection Unit and Anti-Trafficking Unit. (23,38,39) The Rwandan Investigation Bureau, in turn, conducts criminal investigations, including child labor cases, and through its Directorate for Anti-Gender-Based Violence, assists victims of the worst forms of child labor through anti-gender-based violence officers at each of the country's 78 police stations. (38) Both the National Police and Investigation Bureau operate a free hotline to report these incidents. (40) Finally, the National Public Prosecution Authority is responsible for prosecuting violations of labor laws, including laws on child labor, and through its Anti-Gender-Based Violence unit dedicates 12 prosecutors to work with an additional 60 prosecutors trained in handling relevant cases at the district level. (41)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Rwanda took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Public Service and Labor (MIFOTRA) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$166,705 (22)	\$484,080 (10)
Number of Labor Inspectors	37 (22)	37 (10)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (24,42)	Yes (24,42)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (22)	Yes (10)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	9,432 (22)	5,076 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	253 (43)	27 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	8 (22)	27 (10)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	8 (22)	27 (10)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (22)	Yes (10)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (22)	Yes (10)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (44)	Yes (44)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (22)	Yes (10)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (22)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (22)	Yes (10)

Research indicates that Rwanda does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (10,45) Furthermore, despite MIFOTRA's indication that the labor inspectorate was sufficiently funded, research finds that limited resources, lack of personnel, high workloads, and insufficient training may limit labor inspectors' ability to enforce child labor laws and perform onsite inspections, and that officials, at the local level, may have difficulty identifying characteristics of child labor. (8,10,14,22,41)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Rwanda took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Rwandan National Police that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inadequate victim screening and identification.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (22)	Yes (10)
Number of Investigations	8 (22)	27 (10)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	8 (22)	27 (10)
Number of Convictions	0 (22)	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (22)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (22)	Yes (10)

In 2022, several human trafficking trainings were provided to Rwandan government agencies, including to the Ministry of Justice and the Rwandan National Police. (40) However, scarce resources and limited capacity of criminal law enforcement personnel inhibited efforts to investigate human trafficking cases, prosecute suspected perpetrators, and convict human traffickers. Observers also reported continued challenges in officials' ability to distinguish human trafficking from other crimes and reported a need for Rwanda's law enforcement agencies to conduct additional training and capacity building on recognizing and addressing internal forms of human trafficking. (14) Moreover, agencies lack a centralized database to share among law enforcement agencies, hindering coordination efforts. (17)

Recent reports indicate occasional detention of children engaged in so called "deviant behavior," such as street children, children engaged in street vending, and children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging. Sources also indicate that these children are often detained in transit centers before being transferred to rehabilitation centers partly due to inadequate screening by law enforcement officials when identifying victims of human trafficking. (10,14,46) Research indicates that children placed in the primary transit center located in Kigali, also known as Gikondo, faced overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, insufficient food or water, and physical abuse. (23,47) Rehabilitation services at the centers were limited, and children were detained for prolonged periods at transit centers before they were referred to a rehabilitation facility or released back into the street. (15,48,49)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including poor coordination, training, and lack of resources aimed at addressing human trafficking.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interministerial Steering Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates government efforts related to the worst forms of child labor; reviews child labor laws, advocates for the inclusion of child labor policies in national development plans, oversees the implementation of child labor interventions, and conducts field visits to assess the prevalence of child labor and raise awareness of child labor. Led by MIFOTRA. (10) During the reporting period, convened every quarter to discuss progress made and to address any challenges encountered by the committees. (9)

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Reports indicate that poor coordination, training, and resource constraints hindered efforts to address human trafficking and that efforts were focused primarily on transnational rather than domestic human trafficking. (15,41)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Strategic Plan for the Integrated Child Rights Policy 2019–2024	Aims to improve coordination and implementation issues in child protection, including strategies to address child labor. Focuses on key areas of identity and nationality; family and alternative care; health, survival, and standard of living; education; protection; justice; and participation. (50)
Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan	Focuses efforts on human trafficking prevention, victim protection and assistance, prosecution, and strategic partnerships with various stakeholders. (17,51)
Rwanda Urban Development Project Labor Management Procedure	Lays out specific responsibilities for the Ministry of Local Government to monitor and enforce child labor laws at the local level. Mandates that appointed local authorities conduct inspections, enforce child labor laws for rural development projects, and field child labor complaints from Grievance Redress Committees established at local worksites. (6,52)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (53,54)

The National Social Protection Policy includes measures to ensure access to education for children and assists families living in poverty; however, it does not integrate the prevention and elimination of child labor into the policy. (55) In addition, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor in Rwanda during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Programs to Combat Child Labor and Raise Awareness†	Includes Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion's (MIGEPROF) campaign to teach parents and community leaders to recognize risk factors for human trafficking and to identify victims; and the Friends of the Family Program (<i>Inshuti Z'Umuryango</i>), which trains volunteers to prevent and respond to child protection issues and establishes monitoring committees at various levels to address child labor. (38) While the Friends of the Family Program remained active during the reporting period, research was unable to identify specific activities undertaken to address child labor. (10)
Victim Assistance Programs‡	Musanze Child Rehabilitation Center in Northern Province assists children separated from armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (10,23) Gitagata Center provides education, vocational training, and psychosocial support, and aims to reunite former street children with their families. Isange One Stop Centers located in 44 hospitals and district capitals assist survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking. (10,14) In 2022, rehabilitation centers reported the reunification of 3,096 street children and Isange One Stop Centers conducted awareness campaigns and trained police stations, village leaders, hospitals, and health centers on how to properly identify child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse to prevent wrongful arrests. (10)
It Takes Every Rwandan to End Child Exploitation	Advocacy campaign against child labor and sexual abuse of children supported by MIGEPROF and World Vision Rwanda. (10,56) In 2022, World Vision Rwanda, in collaboration with the Rwanda Extractive Industry Workers Union, conducted a week-long awareness campaign through various districts. The campaign focused on child labor and child sex abuse violations. (57)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Rwanda.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (58)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Justice conducted human trafficking awareness-raising campaigns in 111 schools, reaching over 56,000 students and teachers. Human trafficking survivors volunteered to share their stories during these campaigns. (40)

Although Rwanda has programs that target child labor, research did not identify sufficient programming to address the extent of child labor in the agriculture and mining sectors, in which child labor is prevalent. Observers indicate that despite efforts to protect and assist victims of human trafficking, the country's shelter system was focused on short-term needs, with few resources for individuals needing long-term support. (16,40) During the reporting period, there was a decrease in the scope of human trafficking trainings and awareness-raising campaigns, and service providers lacked sufficient training to properly identify victims of human trafficking. (40)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Rwanda (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Increase the compulsory education age from 12 to 16 to align with the minimum age for work.	2020 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of inspectors from 37 to 117 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 4.7 million people.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient resources, personnel, and training to enforce child labor laws and perform onsite inspections.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement has adequate resources to investigate, prosecute, and convict child labor crimes, and has sufficient training and capacity to address the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.	2022
	Cease the practice of detaining and physically abusing children who work on the street and ensure that any children in detention centers receive adequate screening and services and are not subjected to abuse or unhealthy detention conditions.	2018 – 2022
	Improve the ability of law enforcement agencies to share data relevant to the worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that coordinating bodies receive adequate resources and are able to address both domestic and transnational human trafficking.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Social Protection Strategy.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that actions are taken to implement relevant key policies.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement social programs during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2020 – 2022
	Remove barriers to education, such as language barriers for non-English speakers, costs for uniforms and school supplies, and unofficial school fees, and ensure access for children with disabilities.	2010 – 2022
	Expand existing social programs to address all relevant sectors of child labor, including agriculture and informal mining.	2017 – 2022
	Expand services for human trafficking survivors, including programs for long-term care in shelters.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that service providers are properly trained to identify victims of human trafficking.	2019 – 2022

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Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha, in 2022, the government made minimal advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. In 2022, the Government of Ascension enacted the Employment Ordinance, which details the conditions under which children may work, including acceptable work activities and hours. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Research indicates that Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha lacks a functioning labor inspectorate for the enforcement of labor laws and regulations. Labor inspections are a key tool for identifying child labor violations, and their absence makes children more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. In addition, Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha lacks legislation to criminally prohibit forced labor, debt bondage, slavery, and child trafficking.




I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that child labor exists in Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha. (1)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

British Overseas Territories recognize the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the UK but are not constitutionally part of the UK. They are self-governing, except in the areas of foreign affairs and defense. (2) Domestic UK law does not generally apply unless explicitly extended to these territories. Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha are three separate territories that generally incorporate English Law Ordinances to the extent permitted by local circumstances and subject to modification by local laws; several Saint Helena laws also apply to Tristan da Cunha. (2-4) Under Article 35(4) of the ILO Constitution, when the UK ratifies a Convention, the Territory must consider if it will accept the Convention. If the Convention is accepted, it is considered applicable to that Territory. (2,5) The following Conventions have been extended to and accepted by Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha (Table 1).

Table 1. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The Governments of Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha have each established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 2). However, gaps exist in their legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of forced labor.

Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Sections 157B and 158 of the Welfare of Children Ordinance (Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha) (4,6)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 157A, 157B, and 158 of the Welfare of Children Ordinance (Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha) (4,6)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 157B of the Welfare of Children Ordinance (Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha) (4,6)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Sections 8 (Saint Helena), 125 (Ascension), and 190 (Tristan da Cunha) of the Constitution Order: (7)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 57–60 of the Sexual Offenses Act (Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha) (8)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 47–51 of the Sexual Offenses Act (Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha); Sections 145, 147, 157A, and 157C of the Welfare of Children Ordinance (Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha); Sections 48 and 50 of Ascension's Child Welfare Ordinance (Ascension) (4,6,8-10)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 157A and 157C of the Welfare of Children Ordinance (Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha) (4,6)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 34 of the Education Ordinance (Saint Helena); Ascension Island Education Policy (Ascension); Section 3 of the Education By-Law (Tristan da Cunha) (11-13)
Free Public Education	Yes		Sections 16 (Saint Helena), 132 (Ascension), and 198 (Tristan da Cunha) of the Constitution Order; Section 43 of the Education Ordinance (Saint Helena); Ascension Island Education Policy (Ascension) (7,11,12)

* Country has no conscription (2)

† Country has no standing military (14)

Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha are considered one territory, but they are each self-governing. (15) However, all three territories share a governor and attorney general. (16) In January 2022, the Government of Ascension enacted the Employment Ordinance prescribing conditions under which children may work, including acceptable work hours and types of work. The ordinance took effect on June 20, 2022. (1,17)

While Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha meet the international standard for the minimum age for work, Ascension does not because it has set the minimum age for work at age 14, which is below the international standard of age 15. (4,6,17) Ascension allows children to work in part-time jobs that meet the criteria of light work laid out in the ordinance. Ascension also has Youth Trainee Agreements, which act as apprenticeships for children who leave school at age 14 and which serve as a continuation of their education. (1,17) Full-time employment can only be offered to those over the age of 18. (1) Furthermore, while Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha have set their minimum age for hazardous work at age 18 and have identified hazardous occupations for children, Ascension has not set either a minimum age for hazardous work or developed a list of hazardous occupations for children. (4,6,9,10)

Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha have a law against the use of children in illicit activities, but this law does not apply to Ascension. (4,6,10) The laws prohibiting forced labor in Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha are also not sufficient because debt bondage and slavery are not criminally prohibited. (7,10) In addition, while the UK Sexual Offenses Act, which is applicable to this territory, prohibits trafficking for sexual exploitation, it does not specifically address the trafficking of children, and there are no laws prohibiting the trafficking of children for labor exploitation. (8)

Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristán da Cunha

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha lacks a functioning labor inspectorate for the enforcement of labor laws and regulations. (I)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor. (I)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor. (I)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha (Table 3).

Table 3. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2020 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that Ascension's laws establish a minimum age for work of at least age 15.	2022
	Ensure that Ascension establishes age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work and identifies hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that forced labor, debt bondage, and slavery are criminally prohibited.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the trafficking of children for labor exploitation.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities in Ascension.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish a functioning labor inspectorate for the enforcement of labor laws and regulations, including laws pertaining to child labor.	2021 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

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<https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Employment-Ordinance-2022.pdf>

In 2022, Saint Lucia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government renewed its Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan through 2026 and launched a new Border Control Management System that will assist authorities in identifying trafficking in persons cases. Additionally, members of the Human Trafficking Task Force and the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force partnered with U.S. Homeland Security Investigations for training on trafficking in persons. Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Saint Lucia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Saint Lucia has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children and its laws do not sufficiently prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Saint Lucia.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.5 (2,017)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	99.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	8.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		100.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 4), 2012. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,4)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

As the most recent survey concerning child labor in Saint Lucia was completed by the ILO in 2017, Saint Lucia lacks detailed data on the extent of child labor in the country. (3) Some government officials and civil society members reported that anecdotally some children are encouraged or forced to engage in commercial sexual exploitation in exchange for goods or services. (4,5) In some cases, women or teenagers are reported to recruit younger children to engage in commercial sex. (4)

Children in Saint Lucia under the age of 16 are entitled to free public education. (6) General gang-related violence might hinder some children from attending school in select localities. (5,7) Children who do not attend school are vulnerable to engaging in child labor.




II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Saint Lucia has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Saint Lucia

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Saint Lucia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 122 of the Labor Code (8,9)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 122(2) of the Labor Code (8)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 126(b) and 214 of the Labor Code (8)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 4 of the Constitution; Article 6 of the Labor Code; Sections 3, 5, and 10(c) of the Counter-Trafficking Act; Section 3 of the Counter-Trafficking (Amendment) Act (8,10-12)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 3, 5, and 10(c) of the Counter-Trafficking Act; Section 3 of the Counter-Trafficking (Amendment) Act (11,12)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 141 of the Criminal Code; Sections 2, 5, and 7 of the Counter-Trafficking Act; Sections 3 and 5 of the Counter-Trafficking (Amendment) Act (11-13)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 141 and 560 of the Criminal Code; Section 13 of the Drugs (Prevention and Misuse) Act (13,14)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 27 of the Education Act (6)
Free Public Education	No		Article 16 of the Education Act (6)

* Country has no conscription (15)

† Country has no standing military (15)

Saint Lucia has not determined by national law the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. The law allows a government minister to establish a hazardous work list by regulation, although research could not determine whether a list has been established. (8) The use of children for commercial sexual exploitation is not criminally prohibited. (11-13) In addition, the law providing for free basic education does not meet international standards because it permits schools to charge tuition fees for some students who reside in Saint Lucia but are not citizens. (6)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Public Service, Home Affairs, Labor and Gender Affairs	Enforces laws on child labor through labor inspections conducted by its Department of Labor. The Department of Labor is responsible for investigating labor violations. (7) If found, criminal violations are turned over to the RSLPF for investigation and then to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for potential prosecution. (7)
Royal Saint Lucia Police Force (RSLPF)	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (7) Through its Vulnerable Persons Unit, in collaboration with the Division of Human Services, RSLPF investigates cases of child labor, abuse, and neglect. (7, 16) The Vulnerable Persons Unit consists of 2 units of 12 officers each and leads in the enforcement of child labor laws. It uses a specific manual to investigate crimes related to children. (7) Three officers are dedicated to trafficking in persons investigations. During the reporting period, the RSLPF provided anti-trafficking enforcement training via the Police Training Academy, in partnership with a local NGO, for government officials. (16)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Saint Lucia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$496,296 (17)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	8 (17)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (8)	Yes (8)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (17)	No (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	45 (17)	50 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (17)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (17)	N/A (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (17)	N/A (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (17)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (17)	No (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (8)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (17)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (18)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Yes (7)

The government reported that the Department of Labor conducts planned inspections that include child labor, in addition to those carried out in response to complaints. Inspections took place island-wide in the construction, hospitality, tourism, finance, mining and quarrying, wholesale and retail, and manufacturing sectors, with an emphasis on the population centers of the North and the South. (7) Inspectors look for child labor and forced labor violations during all inspections, and the government reported that inspections conducted by staff were sufficient. (5,7) However, insufficient funding may hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws in all relevant sectors and there was no training for new inspectors provided by the Department of Labor during the reporting period. (5,7, 19) The inspectorate is not authorized to assess penalties. Instead, the Department of Labor can refer suspected child labor violations to the police and public prosecutor's office for investigation. (7) When a case of child labor is found, children are primarily referred to the Ministry of Social Transformation and the Department of Social Services for social services. (7)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, the government's criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (17)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (18)	3 (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (18)	0 (7)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (18)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (18)	0 (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Yes (7)

In 2022, the government launched their new Border Control Management System, which will assist authorities in identifying trafficking in persons cases. (16) Members of the Human Trafficking Task Force partnered with U.S. and Saint Lucian trainers for programs, including an overview of Saint Lucia's trafficking law, and worked through culturally appropriate case studies, site visits, and staff training. (5,7) In addition, public awareness campaigns, including radio broadcasts and pamphlets at the main ports of entry, and trainings were organized by the government, local non-governmental organizations, and international partners to sensitize the public to trafficking in persons issues. (16) The Human Trafficking Task Force investigated three separate cases involving four children but determined that trafficking charges were not applicable in any of the cases. (7)

There is special funding to manage operations aspects related to trafficking in persons cases, as well as the ability to fast-track cases in court. (5) Investigators and prosecutors received training on addressing child trafficking. (7)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Human Trafficking Task Force	Coordinates the identification and referral of human trafficking cases among law enforcement, social services, and immigration officials, under the Counter-Trafficking Act. Includes public servants and representatives from, but not limited to, the Department of Labor, police, and victim services NGOs, and is led by the Department of Home Affairs. (5,11,16) Accepts complaints, including those about child labor, from government agencies, as well as civil society. In such cases, the task force works through an established standard operating procedure to organize resources for victim care and to launch criminal and legal proceedings against suspected perpetrators. (7) Convened stakeholders, including the RSLPF, customs, probation, and parole officers, to receive U.S. Homeland Security investigation training. During the reporting period, reviewed its Standard Operating Procedure to strengthen internal processes and improve interagency collaboration. (16,20) The Department of Home Affairs requests funding from the Minister of Finance for operations. (16)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan (2023–2026)†	Ensures that the division of tasks and roles of different agencies are clear to help coordinate all counter-trafficking measures. (21) During the reporting period, was updated to be valid until 2026. (16)
National Social Protection Policy (2014–2024)	Aims to ensure that the government addresses all dimensions of poverty. (22) In 2022, the government held public consultations for updating its National Social Protection Policy to enhance the responsiveness of social protections programs. (7) Revised policy includes increased support for vulnerable citizens. (22)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Although Saint Lucia has adopted the Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan, research found no other evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address child labor in relevant sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Education Quality Improvement Project (EQuIP)	Caribbean Development Bank funds an EQuIP within the Ministry of Education to improve policy formulation and review the Education Act. The project recently graduated 75 teachers from a certificate course in special needs education, provided equipment for four special education centers, and made climate-resilient renovations to three primary schools. (7) EQuIP is also piloting the formation of parent-teacher-community associations at several schools. (7)
Education Access Fund†	Department of Education, Innovation and Vocational Training program to pay facility fees for public school students at the primary and secondary levels. (23)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Saint Lucia.

The government increased subsidies for some school costs such as transportation and school lunch, and allocated additional resources for smart classroom technology. (5,7) Although the Government of Saint Lucia has implemented programs to aid access to education, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs specifically focused on addressing child labor in all relevant sectors.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Saint Lucia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit using a child for commercial sexual exploitation.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the military recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws providing free basic education include all children in Saint Lucia, including non-citizens.	2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient funding.	2015 – 2022
	Collect and publish labor law enforcement data, including information on labor inspectorate funding and the number of inspectors, and strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2022
	Ensure that all inspectors receive training related to child labor.	2022
	Ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the labor inspectorate to enforce labor laws, including funding.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt policies that not only address trafficking in persons, but also address all worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education, and make it accessible for all children by ensuring that gang violence does not affect school attendance.	2018 – 2022
	Design, implement, fund, and participate in social programs that specifically target and assist children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.	2013 – 2022

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REFERENCES

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In 2022, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed amendments to the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act to strengthen penalties for offenders. Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines engage in child labor in agriculture. Gaps remain in the legal framework, as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines does not fully meet international standards because the use of children for prostitution, pornography, or pornographic performances is not prohibited. In addition, the minimum age for hazardous work falls below international standards and there is no legislation prohibiting the using, procuring, and offering of children in illicit activities, including in the production of drugs. The government also did not publicly release information on its labor law enforcement efforts.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		115.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3)

All children in the country are able to access education; however, inadequate public transportation for children in rural villages causes them to walk long distances to get to school, which may make attending school difficult. (4-7) Children out of school are vulnerable to engaging in child labor.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR




Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).



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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including inadequate hazardous work protections.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 8 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (8)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	14	Schedule, Part I, Articles 1, 2, and 5 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (8)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Part I, Sections 3 and 4, and Articles 1, 2, and 5 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act; Section VI(37) of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2017 (8,9)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Chapter XII, Part 207 of the Criminal Code (10)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Part II, Articles 5–8 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (11,12)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Part II, Article 7 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Chapter VIII, Parts 130 and 131 of the Criminal Code; Section 15 of the Cybercrime Act (10-13)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Part I, Article 2 of the Education Act (5)
Free Public Education	Yes		Part III, Articles 14–16 of the Education Act (5)

* Country has no conscription (14)

† Country has no standing military (15)

In March of 2023, Parliament unanimously passed amendments to the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act to strengthen penalties for offenders. (12, 16, 17) The amendments remove the possibility of receiving a monetary fine as a penalty for trafficking offenses, and instead impose criminal penalties. (12, 17)

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines does not meet the international standard for hazardous work for children because it allows children ages 14 to 17 to perform industrial activities, including mining and construction, and does not adequately protect children from hazardous work that may jeopardize their health, safety, or morals. (8)

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The government also has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for all children under age 18. (8,9) In addition, laws have not been established that prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including drug production. The law does not fully meet international standards for the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children, as it does not prohibit the use of children for prostitution, pornography, or pornographic performances. (11) Moreover, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (5)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor	Enforces child labor laws through its Department of Labor and refers victims to appropriate social services. (4) If the Department finds a criminal violation, it forwards the case to the Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force. (18) Conducts inspections at businesses and workplaces, with the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit (ATIPU), to ensure labor laws are followed. (19)
Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force	Makes criminal arrests, including those involving the worst forms of child labor. Addresses human trafficking through its ATIPU; refers survivors to appropriate social services and funds financial requests made by ATIPU. (18,20) During the reporting period, held a "Walk Against Human Trafficking" and panel to raise awareness of labor and sex trafficking. (17)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecution	Prosecutes criminal violations, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (18)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines took actions to address child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$591,907 (7)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	6 (18)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (21)	No (21)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A (7)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	35 (7)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (18)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (18)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (21)	Yes (21)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (18)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (18)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Unknown

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial and human resources.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (22,23)	Yes (19)
Number of Investigations	0 (18)	0 (19)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (18)	0 (19)
Number of Convictions	0 (18)	0 (19)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (18)	N/A (19)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (18)	Yes (19)

In 2022, only data on child trafficking was reported by the government, and information about the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties imposed for other worst forms of child labor is not known. Reports indicate that insufficient resources, including limited personnel and vehicles, hampered the capacity of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit (ATIPU) to address human trafficking throughout the country. (20) In 2022, ATIPU was staffed by two people, which the government reported was inadequate. (24)

In 2022, ATIPU officers received training on evidence collection and increasing the quality of victim services in courses offered by the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and regional counterparts from the Royal Jamaican Constabulary. (17) Training on child trafficking and victim identification was provided for 108 police recruits. (19) There is a dedicated human trafficking hotline and a monitored e-mail address to report suspected cases to ATIPU. (24) ATIPU increased patrols in at-risk areas and during Carnival. (17) When a victim is identified, they are interviewed by ATIPU then referred to the Crisis Centre or other social services while the investigation is launched. (19)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a mechanism to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates government policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate human trafficking, and coordinates training. Comprises senior officials within the government and members of civil society; chaired by the Prime Minister. (19) Develops plans to provide housing, employment, education, counseling, and other services to victims, and coordinates the collection and sharing of human trafficking data among government agencies. (11) The government did not report how often the National Task Force met during the reporting period. (24)

Although Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has a National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons to coordinate efforts to address human trafficking, there is no coordinating mechanism to address other forms of child labor. (11)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons (2021–2025)	Establishes procedures to eradicate human trafficking, including training for frontline staff and other relevant stakeholders; conducts awareness-raising campaigns, and provides victim protection and assistance. (25) Government continued to fund and support the Plan during the reporting year, but did not report whether the budget was sufficient. (24)
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Countering Human Trafficking in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Coordinates anti-TIP implementation efforts between signatory agencies and the ATIPU. Includes the Department of Labor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Social Services Division, Police, and others. (20) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the MOU during the reporting period.

Although Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has adopted the National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, research found no evidence of a policy on other forms of child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the lack of programs to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Zero Hunger Trust Fund†	Government program that provides textbooks, cash for the purchase of school supplies, and daily meals to students in grades 4 and 5 in 12 primary schools. Seeks to alleviate poverty and improve the standard of living of primary school-age children through its "Adopt a Classroom" program. (26) Active in 2022. (26)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>
 † Program is funded by the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

During the reporting period, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines provided resources toward human trafficking awareness campaigns, including placing banners at the cruise ship port and broadcasting a live radio program. (17, 19) Sessions on human trafficking were also organized for 341 individuals at children's summer camps and schools, providing training for at-risk populations. (17) Although the government has implemented a program to address educational and food needs, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs specifically to address child labor, including in agriculture.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Establish 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work and identify hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of children for prostitution, pornography, and pornographic performances.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of children for illicit activities, including in the production of drugs.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.	2016 – 2022
	Increase resources, including personnel and vehicles, for the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit to expand their capacity to address human trafficking throughout the country.	2017 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Collect and publish labor law enforcement data, including information on the number of inspectors, inspectorate funding, the number of worksite inspections, the number of unannounced inspections conducted, training, and number of child labor law violations.	2022
	Publish information about the complaint mechanism to receive child labor complaints and the referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services.	2022
	Publish comprehensive criminal law enforcement data on all worst forms of child labor.	2022
Coordination	Establish a coordinating mechanism to prevent and eliminate all worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information about the activities and meetings of the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant forms of child labor, such as farming.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that resources and budget for the National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons are sufficient to support its activities.	2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Memorandum of Understanding on Countering Human Trafficking in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and publish results from activities implemented on an annual basis.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including children in rural communities, by providing public transportation.	2018 – 2022
	Institute a program to address child labor in agriculture.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, Samoa made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In partnership with the International Labor Organization, the government conducted a Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Vendors, finding a 27 percent increase compared to the same study conducted in 2015. It also provided information on its labor law and criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of labor inspectors, for the first time for inclusion in this report. However, although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Samoa are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in street work, including begging and vending. Samoa lacks laws that prohibit using, procuring, or offering children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. Furthermore, as the minimum age for work of 15 is lower than the compulsory education age of 16, children in Samoa may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Samoa. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	22.1 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	89.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	30.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		114.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019–2020. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming and animal husbandry (3,4)
Services	Domestic work (3,5)
	Street work, including begging, vending, and selling food, toiletries, garlands, and other products (3-9)
	Garbage scavenging (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs (3)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In partnership with the ILO, the government conducted a Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Vendors, finding a 27 percent increase compared to the same study conducted in 2015. (4) The 2015 study found 106 children working as vendors in the streets in Samoa, while the 2022 study found a total of 135 child street vendors. (3,10) Children who participate in street vending may work long hours, work late at night, be exposed to exhaust fumes, and have an increased risk of being hit by passing traffic. (3,11,12)




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II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Samoa has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Samoa's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to criminalize the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 51 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act (13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 51 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act (13)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 51 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act; Article 21 of the Labor and Employment Relations Regulations; Government of Samoa Public Notice on Hazardous Work for Children (13-15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 8 of the Constitution; Articles 2 and 18 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act; Section 157 of the Crimes Act (13, 16, 17)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 155–157 of the Crimes Act (17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 73, 74, 82, and 157 of the Crimes Act (17)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 8 of the International Criminal Court Act (18)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 2 (Section 2) of the Education Amendment Act (19)
Free Public Education	No		

† Country has no standing military (18)

The Labor and Employment Relations Regulations permit children between ages 12 and 14 to engage in light work for a limited number of hours; however, they neither specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken nor define the activities that are permitted. The types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover street work, including begging and vending. (7, 13-15) As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. The Education Amendment Act 2019 raised the compulsory education age to 16. (13) In addition, there is no free basic education for children in Samoa as established by law, increasing the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (19, 20)

Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient because, while they do criminalize forced labor, they do not also criminalize slavery and practices similar to slavery or debt bondage. (13,16,17) Samoa does not meet the international standard for the prohibition of child commercial sexual exploitation because the Government of Samoa's Crimes Act does not protect children ages 16 to 18. (7,17) Research found no evidence of laws that ban using, procuring, or offering of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. (12,21) Samoa also does not meet the international standard for prohibiting non-state military recruitment because its International Criminal Court Act does not apply to children ages 15 to 18. (18)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Labor (MCIL)	Enforces the Labor and Employment Relations Act, which includes investigating complaints of child labor law violations. (22,23) Refers cases to the Ministry of Police and the Office of the Attorney General for enforcement. (23)
Ministry of Police, Prisons, and Corrections Services	Enforces criminal laws related to child labor. (11,23)
Office of the Attorney General	Prosecutes criminal cases of the worst forms of child labor. (23)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Samoa appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (11)	\$47,514 (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (11)	4 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (13,14)	Yes (13,14)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (11,24)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (11)	116 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (11)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (11)	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (11)	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (11)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (14)	No (14)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	N/A (11)	N/A (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (11)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, the government's criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 7).

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (24)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (11)	0 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (11)	0 (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (11)	N/A
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (11)	N/A
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (11)	Yes (4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Labor Taskforce	Comprises MCIL; Ministry of Police, Prisons, and Corrections; Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development (MWCSD); and Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture. Aims to reduce the prevalence of child vendors in towns and cities through patrol sweeps and conducting outreach activities. (23) Formerly the Child Vending Task Force. (23) During the reporting period, the Child Labor Taskforce held three meetings focused on the 2022 Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Vendors. (4)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Care and Protection Policy (2020–2030)	Sets a strategic and high-level direction for child protection in Samoa. Led by MWCSD. (4) Includes policies to prevent, eliminate, and address all forms of child labor and child trafficking, as well as to regulate, monitor, and evaluate child labor in the formal and informal business and employment sectors. (25) During the reporting period, MWCSD implemented community awareness programs and facilitated the Inter-Agency Essential Services Guide on a range of social issues pertaining to children. (26)
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Addressed, developed, and implemented strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. A multinational strategic framework program that consisted of 14 South Pacific nations. (27) Activities during the reporting period were conducted under the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022). (28,29)

The government has not integrated child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Strategy for the Development of Samoa or the Education Sector Plan (2019–2024), which detail the Government of Samoa's goals and key outcomes regarding education and development priorities. (30,31)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	\$19 million, Government of Australia-funded, 4-year project implemented by UNICEF in 14 Pacific Island countries, aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. Prioritizes children's rights including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. (27,28) UNICEF has extended the program to 2023–2037, with approximately \$27 million allocated for child protection programs, including programs focused on eliminating child labor. (32)
The Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme and Government Grant to Mission and Public Schools†	Provide financial support to families to assist with ancillary school fees, supplies, and equipment that their children may need during the school year. (11,33) Both programs were active during the reporting period. (26)
One Government Grant†	Provides direct financial support to Samoan primary and secondary public schools, mission and private schools, and primary schools for students with disabilities and special needs to offset fees normally charged to students. (34,35) The government allocated approximately \$6.5 million for the One Government Grant in fiscal year 2022–2023. (26)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Samoa.

Although the government has implemented educational support programs, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children engaged in street work, including vending.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Samoa (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2017 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the Labor and Employment Relations Regulations specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken and define the activities that are permitted.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the types of work that children perform in Samoa that include work for long hours and in an unhealthy environment, including street work, are prohibited for children under age 18.	2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits commercial sexual exploitation of children ages 16 to 18.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery and practices similar to slavery or debt bondage.	2021 – 2022
	Strengthen the inspection system by permitting and conducting unannounced inspections.	2022
Government Policies	Integrate strategies to eliminate and prevent child labor into the Strategy for the Development of Samoa and the Education Sector Plan.	2012 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in Samoa to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Institute programs designed to address child labor in street work, including vending.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, São Tomé and Príncipe made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government continued to fund three centers run by NGOs that assist vulnerable families, orphans, and children living and working on the street. However, children in São Tomé and Príncipe are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. The Labor Code does not apply to children working outside of a formal labor relationship, such as children who are self-employed. Moreover, limited financial resources hampered law enforcement efforts, and policies addressing the worst forms of child labor do not exist.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in São Tomé and Príncipe. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.



Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	14.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	23.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		84.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming,† including weeding and fertilizing† (3-5)
	Fishing,† including line and hook fishing (3-6)
Industry	Carpentry and woodworking (6,7)
	Construction† (3,7)
Services	Working in shops, restaurants, and bars† (3,4,6,7)
	Street work,† including begging and street vending† (3,6,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation (7,8)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Reports indicate that children with a disability, especially those with mobility or hearing difficulties, may have limited access to education. (4,6)




II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

São Tomé and Príncipe has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in São Tomé and Príncipe's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections for children working outside of a formal labor relationship.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Articles 268(2) and 269 of the Labor Code (9)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 273(2), 274, and 536 of the Labor Code; Article 171 of the Civil Code (9,10)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Work List in Annex IV of the Labor Code (9)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Articles 159 and 160 of the Penal Code (11)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 160 and 181 of the Penal Code (11)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 179–182 of the Penal Code (11)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 279, 280, and 289 of the Penal Code (11)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	<i>Legislation title unknown</i> (12)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 1 of Decree-Law 3/83 (13)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 11 and 12 of the Basic Education System Law (14)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 12 of the Basic Education System Law (14)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (14)

The Labor Code permits children, who have completed their compulsory education, to perform light work that is not deemed harmful to their health or development; however, this framework does not establish a minimum age for light work, and legislation specifying the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken has yet to be adopted. (9) Minimum age protections contained in the Labor Code also do not apply to children working outside of a formal labor relationship, such as children who are self-employed. (9,15) Furthermore, laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize practices similar to slavery or debt bondage and forced or compulsory labor. (11)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (previously the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity, Family and Professional Training)	Enforces labor laws, including child labor. (6,7,16)
Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Human Rights (MOJ)	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor. (7,16)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in São Tomé and Príncipe took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$23,000 (4)	\$86,000 (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	6 (4)	5 (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (17)	Yes (17)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (16)	No (6,16)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	60 (4)	40 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (4)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (17)	Yes (17)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (6)

Children found working as a result of labor inspections are referred to the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Human Rights or to the Directorate of Social Protection and Solidarity within the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs for integration at one of the three support centers. (6,7,16) Although inspections are permitted in all sectors, they are seldom conducted in the informal sector, in which child labor is more prevalent. (4,6) Despite the government's substantial increase in funding for the Labor Inspectorate, most of this money was not disbursed in a timely and effective manner. Additionally, there was a 33 percent decrease in the number of overall labor inspections conducted during the reporting period as compared to 2021. (6) Reports also indicate that the allotted budget for the Labor Inspectorate was insufficient to cover operating costs, including office facilities, fuel, and transportation. Inspectors' lack of technical training also hinders their ability to perform their duties. (4,6,18)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in São Tomé and Príncipe took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (4)	No (6)
Number of Investigations	0 (4)	0 (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (4)	0 (6)
Number of Convictions	0 (4)	0 (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (6)

During the reporting year, investigators lacked resources, including transportation, fuel, and other necessities to carry out investigations. (4,6,7)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Anti-Child Labor Committee	Leads efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. (5,7) Led by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. No activities were undertaken by the committee during the reporting period, due to a lack of resources. (5)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy and Strategy for Social Protection (2014–2023)	Establishes social protection strategies to protect Santomeans by eliminating extreme poverty over a 10-year time frame, reinforcing the rights of children, and addressing child labor. (5,19) No activities under this strategy were taken during the reporting period, due to a lack of resources. (5)

Although São Tomé and Príncipe has adopted a social protection policy which includes child labor issues, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including a lack of social programs to cover all child labor issues.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Support Centers†	Three government-funded centers run by NGOs, operating in areas with high concentrations of poor families, orphans, and street children. Provide household stipends to keep children in school and teach income-generating skills. (20,21) Support centers were active during the reporting period. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Research found no evidence that the government has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children who are engaged in agriculture or the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in São Tomé and Príncipe (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits practices similar to slavery or criminally prohibits debt bondage and forced or compulsory labor.	2021 – 2022
	Establish by law a minimum age for light work of no less than 13 years and adopt legislation defining the activities and conditions permissible for light work.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that minimum age for work laws apply to all children in formal and informal work relationships, including children who are self-employed.	2015 – 2022
Enforcement	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data identifying risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents and ensure that inspections are conducted in the informal sector in which child labor is known to occur.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors are equipped with adequate resources needed to conduct inspections, including office facilities, fuel, and transportation, all disbursed in a timely and efficient manner, and ensure that they receive adequate technical training to strengthen their ability to perform their duties.	2009 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including data regarding imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal investigators are equipped with the necessary resources, including transportation, fuel, and other necessities to carry out investigations, and ensure they receive training to better address violations of the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Anti-Child Labor Committee is active and able to carry out its intended mandate.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt policies to address the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Policy and Strategy for Social Protection and that data on these activities are published.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2021 – 2022
	Increase access to education for children with disabilities, including creating programs that support children with mobility and hearing difficulties.	2021 – 2022
	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation.	2020 – 2022
	Implement programs that specifically address child labor in agriculture.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, Senegal made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the government developed and finalized new standard operating procedures on the identification and investigation of trafficking in persons cases. In an effort to prevent forced begging, the government also spent \$603,000 to assist over 10,934 children in Koranic schools, or *daaras*, that met basic standards of care and child protection. Finally, it coordinated with the international partners in the launch of the Programs to Counter Sex Trafficking in Kédougou. However, children in Senegal are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced begging. Children also perform dangerous tasks in gold mining. Hazardous work prohibitions do not include domestic work or street work, areas in which there is evidence of potential harm to child workers. In addition, Senegal does not have a current national action plan, or a national coordinating body for the elimination of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Senegal. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	22.3 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	53.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	13.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		63.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2015. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Fishing, activities unknown (3)
	Farming, including during harvest season (3)
Industry	Mining gold and iron, including washing ore, crushing rocks, using mercury, and carrying heavy loads† (3-5)
Services	Welding and auto repair (3,6)
	Domestic work (3,7)
	Street work, including vending (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work and gold mining (3,5,7-9)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5,7-9)
	Forced begging (3,4,8,10,11)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Forced begging remains a significant problem in Senegal. (3,4,9) It is a traditional practice to send boys to Koranic schools called *daaras*, where students known as *talibés* receive a Koranic education from teachers known as

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marabouts. The traditional Islamic practice of asking for alms has in certain instances been corrupted, and some *daaras* force children to beg, often for long hours, to collect money to enrich the *marabouts*. (3,4,8,10,12) An estimated 100,000 *talibés* are subjected to forced begging, including over 30,000 in Dakar alone. (10) *Talibés* are often forced to live in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, receive inadequate food and medical care, and are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. (3,4,10,11) Children from rural areas in Senegal and neighboring countries including The Gambia, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea, are particularly vulnerable to this practice and are sometimes subjected to human trafficking. (3,8,10,13)




Children in Senegal are also exploited in domestic servitude and forced labor in gold mines and are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation. (3,7,8) Adolescent girls are often transported from other countries, including Nigeria, for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation around the gold mines in Kédougou. Research shows that human traffickers often tell girls that they are going to Europe, then withhold their identity documents, and use debt bondage to force them into commercial sexual exploitation in Senegal. (3,5,7,8) Additionally, under a system known as *confiage*, Senegalese parents sometimes send their children, primarily young girls, to live with relatives or family friends to have better educational and economic opportunities, often in exchange for domestic labor. However, some girls are not sent to school, and are subjected to forced labor and sexual exploitation. (3,7-9)

While Senegalese law provides for free and compulsory education from ages 6 to 16, approximately one-third of children in this age group do not attend school. (14) In practice, only primary school is tuition-free, and supplementary fees are often charged for secondary school. (14,15) Other barriers to education include lack of birth registration documents, lack of schools and lack of access to transportation, and lack of accommodations for students with disabilities. (6,14,16) Poor sanitation infrastructure, including lack of running water and bathrooms, and sexual harassment in schools force some girls to leave school early. (14,17-19) According to one NGO, sexual harassment and abuse is widespread in secondary schools in Senegal. In certain cases, when girls attempted to reject their male teachers' advances, they were penalized with lower grades, and excluded from class activities. (14,17-19)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Senegal has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Senegal's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibition of military recruitment by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article L. 145 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of the Decree Establishing the Scale of Penalties for Violations of the Labor Code and Associated Rules for Application (20,21)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1–3 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Article 1 of the Ministerial Order No. 3750 Determining the Types of Hazardous Work Prohibited for Children and Youth; Articles 1–3 of the Ministerial Order No. 3751 Determining the Categories of Business and Work Prohibited to Children and Youth (22-24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Ministerial Order No. 3750 Determining the Types of Hazardous Work Prohibited to Children and Youth; Article 2 of the Ministerial Order No. 3751 Determining the Categories of Business and Work Prohibited to Children and Youth (22-24)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles L. 4 and L. 279 of the Labor Code; Articles 2 and 4 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Articles 1 and 2 of the Law Concerning the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices and the Protection of Victims (20,24,25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 1 of the Law Concerning the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices and the Protection of Victims (25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Articles 323 and 324 of the Penal Code (24,26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 2 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor (24)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 19 of Law No. 2008-28 (27)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 19 of Law No. 70-23 on the Organization of National Defense; Law No. 2008-23.(27,28)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 3 of Law No. 2004-37 (29)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3 of Law No. 2004-37; Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution (29,30)

Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor bans the use of children in illicit activities, but neither this law, the Penal Code, nor the Labor Code define specific criminal penalties for this offense. (24-26) The 2005 anti-trafficking law criminalizes forced begging. However, Section 245 of the Penal Code provides that “the act of seeking alms on days, in places and under conditions established by religious traditions does not constitute the act of begging”, which makes it unclear whether forced begging under these religious traditions is criminally prohibited. (4,25,26) Furthermore, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not include domestic work or street work, areas in which there is evidence of potential harm, including sexual abuse, to child workers. (7,22,24) Because the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (20,21,29)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Social Dialogue, and Institutional Relations (MOL)	Identifies and investigates labor code violations, including child labor cases. (3,20) Empowered to refer criminal cases to the Police or Gendarmerie. (17)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Responsible for the enforcement and prosecution of all criminal laws, including criminal violations of child labor laws. (3,31) Through its Criminal Affairs and Pardons Branch, collects information and statistics on criminal cases involving forced child labor, child trafficking, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (3,31)
Ministry of the Interior and Public Security	Oversees all law enforcement agencies, including police officials who investigate cases of human trafficking and forced child begging, and arrests perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor. Houses the Children's Unit, located in Dakar, which employs three officers who specialize in child protection, victim identification, and reintegration. (31) Through its Children's Unit, receives assistance from the Vice Squad in child protection cases. Through its Air and Border Police (<i>Police de l'air et des frontières</i>), focuses on migrant smuggling and transnational crimes. (31)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Senegal took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the insufficient allocation of human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (17)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	68 (17)	Unknown (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (20)	Yes (20)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (17)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (17)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (17)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (17)	N/A (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (17)	N/A (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (17)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (17)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (20)	Yes (20)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (17)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (17)	No (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (3)

The labor inspectorate has assigned one inspector and one controller, who assists the labor inspector in their duties, to child labor cases. (17,20) While no new labor inspectors were hired in 2022, research was unable to confirm the total number of labor inspectors currently employed in Senegal. (3,32) While labor inspectors are allowed to conduct inspections in private homes and farms, where child labor is widespread, there were no inspections of these sites during the reporting period. (3) Anecdotal reports also indicate that there is a lack of child labor law enforcement in the informal sector, which employs the most children. Research suggests that the labor inspectorate only has sufficient funding to inspect the formal sector. (17) The Ministry of Labor, Social Dialogue, and Institutional Relations does not have a dedicated hotline or complaint mechanism to receive reports of child labor. (17)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Senegal took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (17)	Yes (3,33)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (3)

In 2022, the government implemented new standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the identification and referral of trafficking cases. The government also held a 4-day training on the SOPs for agencies responsible for criminal law enforcement, including the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security (MOI). (3,9,33)

The authorities have had limited success in prosecuting cases related to forced begging due to a lack of government coordination, resource constraints, and lack of political support. (4,10,17,34,35) Judicial officials often drop, or reduce charges against Koranic teachers due to social and political pressures. (3,10) Although police stations in Senegal are expected to report cases involving children to MOI's Children's Unit, research found no evidence that this occurs regularly. Research was unable to determine how police stations handled cases that were not referred to the Children's Unit. (34) Many law enforcement and judicial personnel demonstrate insufficient understanding of Senegal's 2005 anti-trafficking law. Research also indicates that training for criminal investigators, which included content covering child labor laws and child protection, was cursory and insufficient to fully enforce existing laws protecting children against labor abuses. (3,8) The government's anti-trafficking database, Systraitte, collects law enforcement and victim protection data. It thus far has only been expanded to four regions, and the government has limited capacity to collect comprehensive criminal law enforcement data. (3,8,33,36,37)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of an entity dedicated to coordinating efforts to address child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons (CNLTP)	Leads efforts to address trafficking in persons, including child trafficking. (3,33) Housed under MOJ. Includes elected officials and representatives from the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender, and Child Protection, the National Police, and the Department of Social Services. (3,17,35) There are no representatives from MOL on the Task Force. (3) In 2022, in cooperation with UNODC, CNLTP developed standard operating procedures for the identification, investigation, and referral of cases concerning trafficking in persons. (9,33)

While various bodies coordinated efforts to address forced child begging and the commercial sexual exploitation of children, there is no comprehensive coordinating body dedicated to preventing and eliminating all worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and domestic work. (17)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a national policy covering all worst forms of child labor.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (2021–2023)	Drafted and implemented by the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons (CNLTP). (3,17) Structured around four priority areas: (1) prevention; (2) protection and care of survivors; (3) pursuit; and (4) research, monitoring, evaluation, and partnerships. (38) Goals include raising awareness and advocating for legislation, conducting public awareness campaigns, improving the capacity of shelters and services for survivors, strengthening the capacity of criminal law enforcement and the judicial system, and improving regional cooperation. (38) In 2022, the government attended the Economic Community of West African States' annual summit on trafficking in persons; cooperated with INTERPOL in its activities to counter trafficking in persons; and coordinated with the U.S. Department of State and the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery in efforts to address sex trafficking in the Kédougou region. (33)
National Strategy on Child Protection	Aims to strengthen child protection systems in Senegal. Organized around the pillars of prevention, care, and promotion of children's rights. (31) During the reporting year, the government, in coordination with the Child Protection Committee in the Dakar region, continued its program for the withdrawal and social reintegration of street children. (3)

Although Senegal has adopted national policies on trafficking in persons and child protection, research found no evidence of a comprehensive policy to address child labor and its worst forms.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Removal and Socioeconomic Reintegration Program for Children in Street Situations†	\$47 million Government of Senegal-funded and operated program to oversee the removal and socioeconomic reintegration of street children, many of whom are victims of forced begging. (3) Provides assistance to <i>daaras</i> to curb forced begging. Aids child victims by returning them to their families, providing shelter in government-sponsored centers, or placing them in foster families. (3) During the reporting year, the government spent \$603,000 to assist over 10,934 children in <i>daaras</i> that met basic standards. (3) However, sometimes rehabilitated street children who are returned to their families end up again being subject to forced begging in <i>daaras</i> . (3,17,39)
Programs to Counter Sex Trafficking in Kédougou, Senegal, (2022–2024) *	Implemented by the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES) in partnership with Free the Slaves/La Lumière and the UNODC. Funded by the U.S. Department of State. (33,40) Aims to address sex trafficking of girls and women in the gold-producing Kédougou region by conducting prevalence research, and enhancing capacity for prevention, prosecution, and protection. (40) The project held a launch event in April 2022 that brought together representatives from CNLTP, UNODC, regional government officials, and other NGOs and civil society organizations. (41)
Centers and Shelters†	Includes the Ginddi Center, which serves abused and vulnerable children, including runaway <i>talibés</i> , street children, and child trafficking survivors. (6,8,13,35) Provides food, education, vocational training, family mediation, medical care, and psychological care in its shelter. (13,35) Supports a 24-hour toll-free hotline staffed by French, Wolof, and Pular speakers, which allows for anonymous reporting of cases of child trafficking and/or labor abuse. (3,8,13) Additionally, MOJ-run transit houses in Dakar, Pikine, and Saint-Louis provide monitoring, education, rehabilitation, and reintegration services for survivors of child trafficking. (6,8,31) During the reporting period, the government continued to operate these shelters. (3,8,33) Space constraints at the Ginddi Center limited the number of children that could receive care. In addition, limited shelter services outside of Dakar meant that trafficking survivors, including children, often received care from NGOs rather than the government. (8)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Senegal.

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

Although the Government of Senegal has implemented programs to address child trafficking and forced begging, research found no evidence that the government has carried out programs to assist children involved in domestic work, agriculture, or mining. (17)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Senegal (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish criminal penalties for the use of children in illicit activities.	2021 – 2022
	Clarify forced begging provisions in the Penal Code and the Law Concerning the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons to explicitly prohibit forced begging, including alms-seeking, under any circumstances.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include sectors in which child labor is known to occur and there are risks of sexual abuse, including street work and domestic work.	2016 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish all relevant information on labor inspectorate funding, training conducted, and the number of inspections conducted at worksites.	2013 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to receive child labor complaints, and track cases of child labor for referral to law enforcement or social services providers.	2014 – 2022
	Provide adequate labor inspectorate funding, employ at least 119 labor inspectors to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 4.8 million people, provide for publication the number of labor inspectors employed, and ensure that cases of child labor are formally reported.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspections and enforcement are carried out in the informal sector, including in private homes and farms.	2014 – 2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement information on the worst forms of child labor, including the number of investigations, violations, and prosecutions, or if penalties were imposed.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that courts have sufficient resources and coordination to be able to successfully prosecute cases.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal cases involving child victims are referred to the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security's Children's Unit.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that training for criminal investigators adequately addresses issues related to the worst forms of child labor in Senegal.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to prevent and eliminate child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure the Ministry of Labor's participation in the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt a national policy to address child labor.	2016 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that all children have access to education by eliminating school-related fees, increasing access to transportation, building additional schools, improving school infrastructure and sanitation, ensuring access for students with disabilities, providing all children with access to birth registration, and protecting children in schools from sexual harassment and abuse.	2011 – 2022
	Institute programs to address child labor in domestic work, agriculture, and mining.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that shelter services are adequate to provide protective care to survivors of child trafficking and the worst forms of child labor.	2022
	Conduct education and awareness-raising activities among families of rescued street children to ensure children are not returned to forced begging.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, Serbia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Center for the Protection of Trafficking Victims conducted trainings for educators, healthcare workers, and other social protection authorities on identifying potential victims of human trafficking. The government also approved the 2022 Plan to Protect Street Children in Situations of Violence, Neglect, and Exploitation, which defines hazardous street labor for children and sets guidelines for coordination between the Centers for Social Work, the Labor Inspectorate, the Basic and Higher Public Prosecutor's Offices, and educational and health institutions. However, children in Serbia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced begging. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work. Serbia's laws do not treat forced child beggars as victims of child labor, and the country's social welfare centers are overburdened with cases, which limits efforts to provide services to survivors of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Serbia. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	18.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	20.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		98.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3)
	Forestry, activities unknown (4)
	Fishing, activities unknown (4)
Industry	Manufacturing, activities unknown (5,6)
	Construction, activities unknown (7,8)
Services	Street work, including washing cars, collecting scrap material, vending, and begging (3,7,8)
	Wholesale and retail trade, activities unknown (4,5,7)
	Working in food service, information and communication, and transportation and storage (6,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,7,8)
	Forced begging (7-11)
	Use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,11)
	Domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (12,13)
	Use in illicit activities, including in petty crime (7,8,11)

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Children from Serbia, particularly girls, those from Roma communities, and children living in rural areas, are victims of domestic human trafficking and the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation. (5,14-16) Undocumented migrants are at a significantly higher risk of human trafficking for the purposes of labor or sexual exploitation. (16)

Constitutional and legal protections prohibit discrimination in the education system against individuals with disabilities. (9,17,18) However, some individuals with disabilities, especially Roma children, face difficulties in accessing education due to a lack of appropriate infrastructure and social prejudices. (19-22) Some Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian children in Serbia also experience challenges in obtaining birth registration, which may make school enrollment difficult and increase their vulnerability to child labor. (5,9,19-21) In addition, placement in non-mainstream schools sometimes discourage Roma children, especially girls, from attending school. (9,13,19,24-27) Roma children are also more likely to begin school at a later age and drop out of school more frequently than their non-Roma peers. (5,23)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Serbia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Serbia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including insufficient measures to prohibit the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 24, 25, and 274 of the Labor Law; Article 66 of the Constitution (17,28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 25 and 274 of the Labor Law; Article 66 of the Constitution (17,28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 25, 84, 87, and 88 of the Labor Law; Regulation on Hazardous Labor of Children (28,29)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 112, 388, and 390 of the Criminal Code; Article 26 of the Constitution (17,30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 112 and 388 of the Criminal Code; Article 26 of the Constitution (17,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 112 and 183–185 of the Criminal Code (30)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Articles 246, 247, and 388 of the Criminal Code (30)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 4 of the Law on Military, Labor, and Material Obligation; Article 39 of the Law on the Army (31,32)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 4 of the Law on Military, Labor, and Material Obligation (32)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 24 of the Law on the Ratification of the Optional Protocol Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict; Article 388 of the Criminal Code (30,33)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 71 of the Constitution; Articles 94 and 98 of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System (17,34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 71 of the Constitution; Article 91 of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System (17,34)

* No conscription (32)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (17,33)

Serbia's law does not treat child beggars as victims, but rather as offenders, and does not criminally prohibit the use of a child in illicit activities except when it results from human trafficking. (31,35) Serbia also lacks sufficient prohibitions for the commercial sexual exploitation of children, as the use of children in prostitution is not explicitly prohibited. (30)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran, and Social Affairs (MOLEVSA)	Through the Labor Inspectorate, inspects businesses, including unregistered businesses. Per mandate established by the Special Protocol of Labor Inspection for Protecting Children Against Child Labor, receives and investigates child labor complaints and informs Centers for Social Work of child labor violations. (9) Has internal sub-units that focus on the protection of children with disabilities and children working on the street. (3) Through the Center for the Protection of Trafficking Victims (CPTV), identifies victims of child trafficking and those at risk, conducts needs assessments, contributes to human trafficking research projects, and refers victims to social services. (13) The CPTV is divided into two parts: the Agency for Coordination of Protection of Trafficking Victims and the Urgent Reception Center. (14,12,19) In addition, the CPTV works with state institutions, international organizations, and NGOs on human trafficking prevention and protection efforts and activities. (19)
Ministry of the Interior (MOI)	Oversees the General Police Directorate and enforces laws prohibiting commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking through the Criminal Police Department. (36) Informs the Centers for Social Work of any child labor violations found. (7,11)
Republic Public Prosecutor's Office	Leads investigations on human trafficking cases and exchanges information through a network of local prosecutors and NGOs. (7)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Serbia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans, and Social Affairs (MOLEVSA) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient labor inspector training.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4,242,720 (9)	\$3,900,000 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	206 (9)	207 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (9)	No (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	63,670 (9)	65,043 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	18 (9)	13 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	16 (9)	13 (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (9)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (7)

The Labor Inspectorate has designated experts on child labor at each of its branches to provide training to other inspectors. (13) Labor inspectors are responsible for inspecting registered and unregistered businesses, including businesses in the agricultural sector. (7) The Labor Inspectorate uses a work plan for inspections that is drafted at the beginning of each year and targets high-risk sectors in which child labor is known to occur, such as agriculture and construction. (7,37) In addition, the Special Protocol of Labor Inspection for Protecting Children Against Child Labor requires labor inspectors to use a checklist to identify child labor during inspections and mandates that police and labor inspectors inform Social Welfare Centers in cases of child labor. The Inspectorate also maintains a hotline number to allow observers to report illegal work activities and other labor irregularities that could impact health and safety at worksites. (7,38)

During the reporting period, labor inspectors participated in trainings on recognizing labor exploitation and human trafficking, and also received additional information on how to coordinate with other relevant institutions in efforts to protect victims of human trafficking. (7,39) However, new labor inspectors receive on-the-job training only by working alongside seasoned inspectors. According to the ILO, the lack of formal training, including training on child labor, may hamper their ability to perform adequate inspections. (7) In 2022, the government allocated approximately \$300,000 less to the Labor Inspectorate's budget than in 2021. Additionally, the Labor Inspectorate continued to face workload difficulties due to a lack of personnel. (7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Serbia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (9)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	21 (40)	26 (41)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	7 (40)	12 (7)
Number of Convictions	1 (40)	23 (41)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (40)	Yes (41)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (7)

Criminal law enforcement authorities continue to adhere to the 2017 Special Protocol of Labor Inspection for Protecting Children Against Child Labor, which authorizes police and labor inspectors to inform the SWCs regarding any cases of child labor discovered during inspections. The SWCs, the primary providers of social services to human trafficking victims, also assist authorities with child trafficking cases. (7,13) The Center for the Protection of Trafficking Victims (CPTV) indicated that 25 children who were victims of trafficking were identified by authorities during the reporting period, including 4 children involved in forced begging and 2 children who were compelled to commit criminal acts. The CPTV also indicated that authorities showed improvements in the identification of minor victims of trafficking, and that in 2022 approximately 40 percent of all human trafficking cases in Serbia involved children. (7)

Training on identifying human trafficking is provided as a part of the general police curriculum given to law enforcement officials who process immigration cases. (42) Continuous training on identifying human trafficking is also provided to one public prosecutor in each of the 25 Higher Public Prosecutor's Offices. However, sources indicated that some agencies responsible for investigation of human trafficking cases lack funding. (3) While government sources indicate that misdemeanor charges against children are rare, charges were brought against 15 children for begging in 2022. (7)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Council for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (Anti-Trafficking Council)	Sets government policies on human trafficking and drafts annual standard operating procedures for CPTV. Chaired by MOI, with the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons acting as the Secretary of the Council. (11) The Council remained active during the reporting period, though the National Coordinator position remained vacant, which affected this coordinating body's ability to collaborate with relevant institutions. In addition, reports indicate that the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons continued to lack adequate financial and human resources to carry out their duties. (7,19)

While the government continues to support the Refugee Protection Working Group and the Council for Children's Rights, there is no unified mechanism to coordinate efforts to address all worst forms of child labor. However, in May 2022, the government signed the Plan to Protect Street Children in Situations of Violence, Neglect, and Exploitation, which delineates the roles of government agencies and non-governmental entities to protect vulnerable children, including the Centers for Social Work, the Public Prosecutors' Offices, and the Labor Inspectorate, as well as civil society, health, and educational institutions. (7) Additionally, the government collaborated with the European Union and the Council of Europe on a joint project entitled "Prevention and Fight Against Human Trafficking in Serbia" to strengthen the collaboration between the Labor Inspectorate, law enforcement authorities, and social services institutions, including the National Coordination Office for the Fight Against Human Trafficking, the Center for the Protection of Trafficking Victims, and the Public Prosecutor's Office. (7,39)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant Roma policies.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Roadmap for Eliminating Abuse of Child Labor in Serbia (2018–2022)	Established a roadmap for eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Focused on support for children working on the streets and vulnerable families, as well as the creation of a system within Social Welfare Centers (SWCs) to monitor and record risks of child labor. (43) During the reporting period, the ILO conducted an assessment of the 2018–2022 roadmap to inform the development of the government’s subsequent 2023–2026 policy. (7)
Protocol on Rules and Procedures for the Institutions and Organizations Working with Children Involved in Life and Work on the Streets of Belgrade	Aims to enhance institutional cooperation among MOI, the Criminal Police Directorate, the Communal Police, city SWCs, the Belgrade City Secretariat for Education, the Belgrade City Secretariat for Health, and civil society organizations. (44) Defines street children, worst forms of child labor, child work, and child trafficking. (13,44) Stipulates lead institutions, rules, and procedures for interacting with street children. The policy was active during the reporting period. (7)

Although the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion (2016–2025) seeks to improve access to education for the Roma population in Serbia, including by providing access to preschool, child labor elimination and prevention strategies are not specifically included in the policy. (45,46)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Access to Education Programs†	World Bank, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development project that aims to improve access to early childhood education for socially disadvantaged children, including children with disabilities and children from ethnic minority groups. (47) The program was active during the reporting period. (7)
Belgrade Children’s Shelter‡	Social welfare institution funded by the City of Belgrade; opened in 2019. (3) Caters to vulnerable children between the ages of 7 and 18. Provides accommodation services and daytime shelter services to meet the needs of young people and street children, who are subsequently referred to SWCs and judicial authorities. (3) The shelter was operational during the reporting period. (7)
Strengthening the Identification and Protection of Victims of Trafficking†	IOM, CPTV, and MOI project that contributes to the implementation of the National Anti-Trafficking Strategy by improving mechanisms for the prevention and identification of victims of human trafficking. (23) MOI, MOLEVSA, and the Public Prosecution Office maintain a Memorandum on Cooperation in the Field of Suppression of Human Trafficking and the Rights Protection of Human Trafficking Victims. The Memorandum defines mutual rights in the identification of human trafficking, assistance and protection of victims, and statistical reporting. (5,14,48) During the reporting period, the CPTV provided trainings on identification and referral of victims of human trafficking for social welfare workers, healthcare workers, and educators. (7,11)

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Serbia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (5,14,49)

SWCs provide social services, track the number of street children, and receive reports of labor violations from MOLEVSA and the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) to assist in tracking which sectors have the highest number of working children. According to MOLEVSA, the SWCs are significantly overburdened due to insufficient staffing and high caseloads. (7,11)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Serbia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs, and eliminate the requirement that illicit activities must directly stem from human trafficking.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the use of children for prostitution is criminally prohibited and that the Criminal Code's provisions on pimping, procuring, and mediation in prostitution include all children under age 18.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Provide comprehensive training to labor inspectors so they are able to carry out their inspection mandates.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal investigators and agencies addressing human trafficking have the necessary funding to conduct thorough investigations.	2010 – 2022
	Publish data pertaining to labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the Labor Inspectorate is adequately funded to facilitate both regular operations as well as the hiring of new labor inspectors.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons is adequately funded and staffed.	2022
	Establish a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address all worst forms of child labor.	2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that staff members at Social Welfare Centers have sufficient resources, such as personnel and funding, to address the specific needs of child trafficking victims.	2015 – 2022
	Address policy and social barriers to education via targeted programming for disadvantaged populations, including improving access to birth registration documentation; increasing access to education for children with disabilities; and increasing educational access and retention rates for minority populations, particularly migrant children, Roma children, and girls.	2013 – 2022
	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children engaged in child labor, including those in farming, construction, forestry, fishing, manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Sierra Leone made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, which increased prison terms for sex trafficking and established a trust fund for survivors of human trafficking to pay for shelter, medical services, and legal aid. The government also launched a hotline to report trafficking crimes and established a National Migration Policy to promote the rights of migrants and increase public awareness of human trafficking. However, children in Sierra Leone are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in mining. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in quarrying stone and fishing. Sierra Leone's light work provisions do not specify the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken or limit the number of hours of light work, which does not meet international standards. In addition, Sierra Leone lacks a national policy and social program to address all relevant worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Sierra Leone. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	35.1 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	78.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	32.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		98.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2017. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Cultivation of cassava, palm fruit, cocoa, coffee, peanuts, and rice, and processing <i>garri</i> flour (3,4)
	Fishing,† including artisanal fishing (3-8)
Industry	Mining† for diamonds, gold, and sand (5-9)
	Quarrying† and crushing stone, including granite, and shoveling gravel (4-9)
	Construction, including housing construction, and serving as laborers for contractors (3-8)
	Manufacturing,† activities unknown (5,6,8)
	Production of charcoal (4-7)
Services	Scavenging scrap metals and recyclable materials from dumpsites (4)
	Domestic work (5-7,10)
	Street work, including begging, trading, and selling goods (5-7,10)
	Portering, including carrying heavy loads† (8,9)
	Working as apprentices, including in auto repair shops and on transportation vehicles, including mini buses and motorbike taxis (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging (7,8,11)
	Domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,8,11)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,8,11,12)
	Forced labor in street hawking, mining, agriculture, scavenging for scrap metal, motorbike taxi driving, quarrying granite, rock breaking, and mining for alluvial diamonds (6,9,12-14)
	Cultivation of marijuana (6,7)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.







Sierra Leone is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking for labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (4,15-18) Sierra Leone also has a form of internal child trafficking called *men pikin*, meaning foster care in Krio, in which family members send children to relatives in urban areas with promises of better educational opportunities. However, some children are instead subjected to forced labor, including in street hawking, domestic work, mining, agriculture, scavenging for scrap metal, and motorbike taxi driving. (6-8,10,11,13,14,19) In addition, some children sent to Koranic schools are trafficked for labor exploitation. (8,10,18)

Despite government initiatives to make education free through secondary school, substantial barriers remain, including a lack of schools and teachers, the costs of uniforms and supplies, limited transportation to schools, and sexual and gender-based violence by teachers and other students. (5-8,20-22) In particular, one report indicated that teachers demanded sex from students in exchange for higher grades. (4,6) Research also found that unqualified teachers were removed from schools in several rural communities without being replaced, resulting in some schools closing. All of these factors contributed to a high dropout rate, especially among girls. (4,6)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Sierra Leone has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Sierra Leone’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of specific provisions on light work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Section 125 of the Child Right Act; Section 52 of Chapter 212, Employers and Employed Act (23,24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 128 of the Child Right Act (23)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 128 of the Child Right Act; Sections 47–56 of Chapter 212, Employers and Employed Act; Sections 164 and 170 of the Mines and Minerals Act (23-25)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 1 and 12–14 of the 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act; Section 19 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (26,27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 1, 12–14, and 17–19 of the 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act (27)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 1, 12–14, and 17–19 of the 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act; Sections 26–34 of the 2012 Sexual Offenses Act (27,28)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 7 and 13 of the National Drugs Control Act (29)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 28 of the Child Right Act (23)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Sections 1 and 12 of the 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act (27)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Section 3 of the Education Act; Section 125 of the Child Right Act (23,30)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 3 of the Education Act; Section 9 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone; Section 11(c) of the Child Right Act (23,26,30)

* Country has no conscription (31)

In April 2022, the Sierra Leone Parliament passed the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, which raised the prison term for trafficking from a maximum of 10 years to a minimum of 25 and established a Trafficking Victims Fund to provide shelter, medical services, and legal aid to trafficking survivors. (27,32) The Act also established an independent Trafficking in Persons Secretariat within the Ministry of Social Welfare. (14,27) However, even though the Child Right Act sets the minimum age for light work at age 13, it does not limit the number of hours per week for light work, determine the activities in which light work may be permitted, or specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken, which is not in compliance with international standards. (23) In addition, although the Child Right Act identifies hazardous work prohibited for children, it does not cover scavenging for recyclable materials at dumpsites, an activity for which there is evidence that children in Sierra Leone are exposed to hazardous medical waste. (5,10,13,23,33)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS)	Enforces labor laws in the formal sector via its District Labor Officers. Through its Child Labor Unit, formulates, implements, and monitors compliance with child labor regulations. (7)
Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources	Enforces regulations against the use of child labor in mining. Authorized to suspend licenses of mining operators found using child labor. (7)
Ministry of Internal Affairs' Police and Transnational Organized Crime Unit	Leads the investigation and prosecution of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse through Police Family Support Units, which are mandated to minimize and eradicate the incidence of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse. Through its Transnational Organized Crime Unit, enforces human trafficking laws and provides statistical data and general information on cases of human trafficking. (5,7) Refers cases for prosecution to the Ministry of Justice's Director of Public Prosecution. (7)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Sierra Leone took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (7)	\$30,000 (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	29 (7)	29 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A (7)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (7)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (7)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (7)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (7)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (7)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (24,34)	Yes (25,34)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (7)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (4)

Reporting suggests that the Ministry of Labor conducted more labor inspections in 2022 than in previous years and identified at least one child labor violation in the gold mining industry during the reporting period. However, the government did not publish its labor enforcement data, and available records were inconsistent. (4) Research indicates that Sierra Leone does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (4,35,36) There is a significant lack of resources for labor inspections because the MLSS does not have the necessary funding, and has only one vehicle for inspections. (5-7) In addition, very few inspections are conducted in the informal sector, where child labor is known to occur. (7,8) Although the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources can conduct inspections on mining concessions and revoke licenses from employers who are found to be using child labor, research found that a limited number of inspectors, a lack of funding, and the practice of notifying employers in advance may have hindered enforcement efforts. (15,37,38)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Sierra Leone took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (7)	Unknown (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (7)	Unknown (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (7)	Unknown (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (7)	Unknown (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (7)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (4)

In February 2022, the government launched a hotline to report trafficking crimes. During this first year of operation, the hotline did not receive reports leading to victim identification or criminal investigation. (14,39) Sierra Leone's Family Support Units reported 24 child trafficking cases during the reporting period. From April

to December of 2022, a civil society organization also reported identifying 31 child trafficking survivors, who were then provided with trauma-informed care. (14) The government, in cooperation with other organizations on the National Task Force on Human Trafficking, trained 16 paramount chiefs in the Kenema district on trafficking identification during the reporting period as part of the launch of its Prevention and Response to Child Trafficking in Persons project. (14) In addition, 55 district-level social workers in Kambia, Kono, Kailahun, and Kenema districts were given training on trauma-informed care in the context of human trafficking. However, research found that criminal law enforcement in Sierra Leone, particularly efforts to address human trafficking, is hampered by limited funding, lack of training of law enforcement personnel and the judiciary, and poor data sharing between the Director of Public Prosecution and the Family Support Units. (4,5,18)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Technical Steering Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates efforts to address child labor. Led by MLSS and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MGCA) and includes representatives from 10 other government agencies, international organizations, and NGOs. (4) As part of the National Technical Steering Committee on Child Labor, the National Commission for Children advises the government on ways to improve child welfare. In 2022, the steering committee facilitated the operations of the Child Welfare Committees alongside MGCA and NGOs, mainly at the district level. (4)

The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs was also active during the reporting period, conducting consultations alongside the First Lady to raise awareness on child labor and other issues affecting women and children across the country. (4,8) The Child Right Act requires the establishment of a Child Welfare Committee in every village and chiefdom (the third level of administrative subdivision, below districts and provinces); however, research indicates that these committees do not function in every chiefdom and may lack effectiveness. (4,8,23)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2021–2023)	Promotes cooperation between NGOs, international organizations, and government agencies to address human trafficking. (41) Establishes strategic objectives to ensure the thorough investigation of trafficking cases. (42) Following the adoption of the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act 2022, the Trafficking in Persons Secretariat worked to establish implementation and awareness plans for the new law as well as capacity-building events for law enforcement personnel. (14)
National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools (2021–2026)	Ensures that schools throughout Sierra Leone are accessible to all children, especially those typically marginalized or excluded, including children with disabilities, children from low-income families, children in rural and underserved areas, and girls who are currently pregnant or already parents and in school. (7,43) In March 2022, the government approved an implementation plan for the policy through 2026. (43)
National Migration Policy†	Aims to protect the right of migrants, with specific reference to trafficking survivors, asylum seekers, and children. Also seeks to increase public awareness of human trafficking and build the capacity of law enforcement personnel to detect and prevent trafficking, especially child trafficking. (44) Established by the government with support from the EU, the Africa Regional Migration Program implemented by IOM, and the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. (44,45)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (5)

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Although the Government of Sierra Leone has a National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, including child labor in mining, quarrying, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (14)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Child Trafficking Shelters†	Refer children to privately run shelters that house child survivors of forced labor and human trafficking. During the reporting period, World Hope International operated a shelter for trafficking survivors, which provides mental health services, medical services, tracing, and reintegration assistance. (14,18)
Free Quality School Education†	A Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education program that covers the costs of school tuition and fees and provides meals, textbooks, and some teaching materials in remote communities. (5,6,46) In 2022, the program remained active, complemented by additional educational inclusion efforts initiated under the National Strategy for Out-of-School Children and the National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools. (47-49)
U.S. Government-Funded Projects	USDOS Program to End Modern Slavery funded a study to research the prevalence, methods, and impacts of child trafficking and child labor in Kono, Kenema, Kailahun, and Kambia districts of Sierra Leone. (3) The research, published during the reporting period by the Center on Human Trafficking Research and Outreach at the University of Georgia in conjunction with the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery, established a baseline prevalence, and identified gaps in policies and services aimed at preventing and addressing child trafficking in the country. This evidence base helped highlight the issues to policy stakeholders in support of legislative advances in the area of human trafficking. (8,32)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Sierra Leone.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (8)

Sierra Leone has too few and underfunded shelters and safe houses for children who have been withdrawn from working on the streets or in forced labor. (4,13) Although the Government of Sierra Leone has implemented programs to assist child trafficking survivors, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children working on the streets, in agriculture, and in domestic work. (5)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Sierra Leone (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the Child Right Act's light work provisions specify the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken and limit the number of hours of light work.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that hazardous work occupations prohibited for children are comprehensive, including by prohibiting scavenging at dumpsites.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 29 to at least 70 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 2.8 million people.	2011 – 2022
	Provide labor and criminal law enforcement officials with sufficient funding and additional vehicles to adequately enforce labor laws throughout the country, including in the informal sector.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that the Ministry of Mines has adequate funding and resources to carry out enforcement efforts.	2015 – 2022
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number and type of inspections conducted, the number of violations found, and penalties imposed and collected.	2011 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that unannounced inspections are conducted and cease the practice of informing employers ahead of time.	2020 – 2022
	Provide additional training to criminal law enforcement personnel and the judiciary to ensure that violations are adequately investigated and prosecuted.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including training for criminal investigators, the number of investigations undertaken, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and penalties imposed for the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the Director of Public Prosecution and the Family Support Units share data to adequately enforce criminal violations including child trafficking.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that village-level and chiefdom-level Child Welfare Committees are established and operational in all areas.	2014 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt policies to address child labor in relevant sectors, such as mining, quarrying, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Remove barriers to education by providing transportation to school, increasing the number of schools and qualified teachers, reducing school-related costs, and eliminating abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence by teachers and other students.	2013 – 2022
	Increase the availability of and funding for shelters and safe houses for survivors of forced labor and children removed from street work.	2009 – 2022
	Institute programs to address child labor in agriculture, domestic work, and street vending.	2019 – 2022

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In 2022, the Solomon Islands made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of the Solomon Islands ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. A national survey on the state of inclusive education was also conducted and a new national education action plan was launched. However, children in the Solomon Islands are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Research shows that children are also involved in the harvesting of palm oil fruits. The minimum age for work of 12 years does not meet the international standard of 14 years, and the Solomon Islands has not established a minimum age for hazardous work or delineated the types of work considered hazardous for children. Furthermore, there is no law that makes education compulsory, which increases children's vulnerability to child labor. The government also did not publish labor and criminal law enforcement data for the reporting year.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Solomon Islands. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		85.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working on plantations, including harvesting palm oil fruits (3,4)
	Harvesting of seafood, including deep-sea diving (3,4)
Industry	Alluvial mining† (3,4)
	Furniture construction (3,4)
	Construction on roads and buildings (3,4)
Services	Domestic work, including working as cooks (3,4)
	Working in nightclubs, casinos, and motels (5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5-7)
	Forced harvesting of seafood (5)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the cultivation and trafficking of drugs (5)
	Forced domestic work, including working as cooks (5)
	Forced pickpocketing (5)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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In the Solomon Islands, the commercial sexual exploitation of both boys and girls is prevalent near logging camps; near or aboard fishing vessels; and at hotels, casinos, and entertainment establishments. (5,6) Children also are forced to assist in manufacturing and transporting drugs. (5) Children in the country are vulnerable to forced labor in the agriculture sector, including on palm oil plantations, and in the harvesting of seafood. (3,5)

In 2022, the Government of the Solomon Islands, in partnership with UNICEF, conducted a national survey on the state of inclusive education. (8,9) This survey found that only a small number of schools nationwide have classrooms that are accessible and safe for people with disabilities, and only about half of schools have sanitation facilities that are accessible and safe for all. (9) Furthermore, although there is a Fee-Free Basic Education Policy, which provides free education up to grade nine, research revealed that the policy was not implemented and the Minister of Education and Human Resource Development asked parents to pay school fees. (10) In addition, teacher absenteeism and transportation limitations also make it challenging for some children to access education. (11,12) There are no nationally representative data available on the prevalence and nature of child labor in the Solomon Islands. Research found no evidence that the government funded or participated in social programs that include the goal of preventing or eliminating child labor.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Solomon Islands has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

In 2022, the Government of the Solomon Island ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. (13) It also ratified The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) in early 2023. (13,14)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the Solomon Islands' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of a minimum age for hazardous work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	12	Article 46 of the Labor Act (15)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		Articles 47–49 of the Labor Act. (15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 47–49 of the Labor Act (15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 6 of the Constitution; Articles 251 and 256 of the Penal Code; Articles 70–79 of the Immigration Act (16,17)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 70–79 of the Immigration Act; Article 145 of the Penal Code (17,18)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 136, 141, 143, and 144 of the Penal Code (17)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

† Country has no standing military (19)

The Solomon Islands' minimum age for work, 12, is not in compliance with international standards. (15) Additionally, although the Labor Act prohibits all children under age 18 from working at night and regulates work in mines and on ships, it does not clearly establish a minimum age for hazardous work or delineate the types of work considered hazardous for all children. (6,15) The legal framework also does not prohibit dangerous work in scavenging or in agricultural activities for which there is evidence of children being exposed to injuries, extreme temperatures, and chemicals. (15,4) The Penal Code includes heightened penalties if an offense is committed against a child, but has insufficient prohibitions against child trafficking because the transfer of children is not criminalized. (17,20) Furthermore, the law also does not criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities. (11) Finally, education is not compulsory, which increases children's vulnerability to child labor exploitation, and there are no laws that provide free basic education. (10,21)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws. Additionally, research found no evidence that law enforcement agencies in the Solomon Islands took actions to address child labor.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labor and Immigration (MCILI)	Enforces child labor laws. (11,12) Through its Immigration Division, leads efforts to address human trafficking, including the trafficking of children. (4,22)
Royal Solomon Islands Police	Enforce criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor. (12) Jointly investigate human trafficking cases along with the Solomon Islands Immigration Division. (23)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in the Solomon Islands took actions to address child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (15)	Yes (15)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (15)	Yes (15)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Unknown (24)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)

The Government of the Solomon Islands did not respond to requests for information related to its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (24) Insufficient resources likely hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws. (4,21) While the number of labor inspectors is unknown, research indicates that the Solomon Islands does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (11,25)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in the Solomon Islands took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (4)	Unknown (24)

The Government of the Solomon Islands did not respond to requests for information related to its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (24)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Advisory and Action Committee on Children (NAACC)	Coordinates the government and NGOs to address child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. (27) Comprises representatives from several ministries, including the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs; MCILL; and the Ministry of Home Affairs. Several NGOs participate, including Save the Children, UNICEF, and WHO. (27) Research was unable to determine whether NAACC was active during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Education Action Plan (2022–2026)†	Outlines key priorities and strategies to achieve the nation's educational goals. (28)
National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling (2020–2025)	Establishes a coordinated effort to eliminate human trafficking and people smuggling on the Solomon Islands. Led by the Anti-Human Trafficking Advisory Committee. (26,29) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan during the reporting period.
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Multinational strategic framework, comprising 14 South Pacific nations, created to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating the worst forms of child labor. (30) Research was unable to determine what actions were taken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy during the reporting period.

† Policy was launched during the reporting period.

Although the Solomon Islands has adopted the National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government funded or participated in social programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the Solomon Islands (Table 10).

Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for employment to comply with international standards.	2009 – 2022
	Establish age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work.	2009 – 2022
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, including the types of work for which there is evidence of hazards, such as in scavenging and agriculture.	2009 – 2022
	Establish by law a compulsory age of education that aligns with the international standard for the minimum age for employment.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the transfer of children for the purpose of child trafficking.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2011 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish by law free basic public education.	2018 – 2022
	Publish information on child labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, the number and type of labor inspections conducted, violations found, information about the training system for labor inspectors, and penalties imposed and collected.	2009 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of child labor investigations initiated, the number of prosecutions initiated, the number of convictions secured, and the sentences imposed.	2009 – 2022
	Publish data about reciprocal referral mechanisms between labor and criminal authorities and social services.	2021 – 2022
	Employ at least 9 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 369,000 people.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information about child labor-related training for labor inspectors and criminal investigators.	2021 – 2022
Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient resources to enforce child labor laws.	2022	

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Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Coordination	Ensure that the National Advisory Action Committee on Children is able to successfully coordinate government and NGO efforts to address child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children and publish information regarding the Committee's efforts.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that incorporates eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor as an objective.	2016 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy and the National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Establish and participate in programs to prevent, address, and eliminate child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Eliminate barriers to basic education, including by eliminating school-related fees and teacher absenteeism, improving access to school transportation, and by ensuring that all schools are equipped with proper sanitation facilities and are accessible for students with disabilities.	2014 – 2022

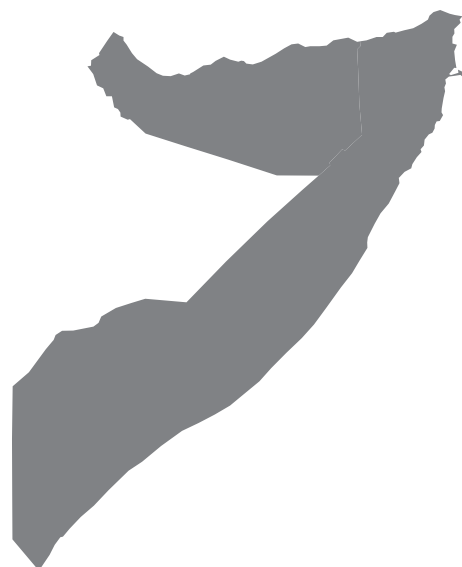
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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Somalia is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement. The Somali police force participated in trainings conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime with the goal of increasing anti-trafficking efforts. Somaliland, which has self-declared independence from Somalia but is not recognized by any country, also criminalized human trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Somalia is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because it continued to implement practices that delay advancement to eliminate child labor. During the reporting period, there is evidence that federal and state security forces continued to recruit and use children in armed conflict, in violation of national law. In other cases, government security forces detained children for suspected association with armed groups, in some cases subjecting them to lengthy interrogations and coerced confessions. In addition, the government did not conduct worksite inspections in 2022. Children in Somalia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work. Somali laws do not criminally prohibit child labor trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, or the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups. Furthermore, the government did not provide complete information on its criminal law enforcement efforts to address the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this report.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Somalia. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report. (1)

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Related Entity	Percent
Working (%)	5 to 14	Somalia (North East Zone)	9.5 (Unavailable)
	5 to 14	Somalia (Somaliland)	13.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Somalia (North East Zone)	38.3
	5 to 14	Somalia (Somaliland)	44.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Somalia (North East Zone)	4.7
	7 to 14	Somalia (Somaliland)	6.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)			Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (2)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 4), 2011. (3)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including planting, weeding, harvesting, and cleaning and packing crops (1,4-8)
	Herding livestock, including goats, sheep, and camels (1,4,5,7,8)
	Fishing, including cleaning fish (1,4,7,8)
Industry	Construction, including crushing stones, mining, and excavating (1,4,7-10)
Services	Working as maids or domestic staff in hotels and private residences (4-6,8)
	Domestic work (7,8)

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including shining shoes, washing cars, driving minibuses, vending, and transporting and selling <i>khat</i> (a legal, amphetamine-like stimulant) (1,7,8,10)
	Voluntarily recruited children used in hostilities by state armed groups (4,11)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Recruitment of children by state and non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict and supporting roles, including as cooks, porters, and informants, or to operate checkpoints (7,11)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, herding livestock, breaking rocks, selling or transporting <i>khat</i> , begging, and construction work (7,8,11)
	Use in illicit activities, including trafficking drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,7,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking (7,8,11)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) maintains limited territorial control outside populated areas. Al-Shabaab, a non-state armed group, occupies rural areas in south-central Somalia. (11) In 2022, as in previous years, Somalia recorded one of the world’s highest numbers of child abductions by non-state actors. (12) State and non-state armed groups recruited at least 1,094 children during the reporting period. (12) Al-Shabaab, which forcibly recruited children as young as age 8 into its ranks, committed a majority of these violations in the first half of the reporting period, recruiting 902 children. (12) Al-Shabaab fighters infiltrate madrassas and mosques, using deception or coercion tactics to forcibly recruit victims, including children, into sexual slavery and combat and support roles. (11) Al-Shabaab also continued the practice of forcing communities to turn over male children to serve as child soldiers, imposing a financial penalty on families who refused to cooperate. (5,11-13) Moreover, Somalia’s numerous clan militias reportedly recruited children for use in armed conflict. (4,11,12) Children from minority clan households are uniquely vulnerable to forced recruitment by military groups, including at school. (14) Research indicates that conflicting interpretations regarding the definition of children and the age of adulthood likely contribute to problems of child recruitment by armed forces and delays in legal and policy interventions to address the problem. (15)

The reporting period saw continued allegations of grave violations against children linked to federal and state government security forces, including recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and sexual violence. (12) Perpetrators included federal armed forces and security services, and regional forces and police in Galmudug, Jubaland, and Puntland. (12,16) In 2022, the UN verified the recruitment and use of children by the Somali Federal Defense and Police Forces (36 children recruited), National Intelligence and Security Agency (1 child recruited), Jubaland police and security forces (6 children recruited), Galmudug police and armed forces (9 children recruited), Puntland police and armed forces (44 children recruited), and clan militia (65 children recruited). (12) Child recruitment is in violation of Somalia’s General Order No. 1, which prohibits military personnel from recruiting and employing child soldiers. (17) In 2022, the IDP population grew due to both severe drought conditions and ongoing conflict. (18) IDPs, including children, remain acutely vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor. Non-state armed groups have been reported to recruit children in IDP communities. (18)




Somalia lacks a countrywide birth registration system, further complicating efforts to identify victims of child labor. Access to education further deteriorated during the year amidst recurrent climate shocks, including widespread famine, and protracted violence. (19,20) State and non-state forces occupied and damaged schools, further limiting access to educational facilities. (12) The limited number of public schools outside of Mogadishu and high fees charged by private schools also undercut enrollment rates. (7,14) Girls faced additional obstacles, including lower prioritization of girls’ education and insufficient female teachers, which negatively affected girls’ attendance and learning. (7,21) Pastoralist communities, which account for approximately 25 percent of Somalia’s population, faced additional impediments to education, as their nomadic existence makes static schools impractical. Children and youth among these groups are considered at high risk of exploitation or recruitment into armed groups such as al-Shabaab. (5,14) For many IDP children, nearby schools do not exist; even where donors build temporary learning spaces, IDP children typically experienced disrupted education due to constant movement and unpredictable evictions from their camp homes. (9)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Somalia has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Somalia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including prohibiting the recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 93 of the Labor Code; Article 38(1) of the Private Sector Employees Law (22,23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 90 of the Labor Code; Article 38(2) of the Private Sector Employees Law; Article 29 of the Provisional Constitution (22-24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 90 and 94 of the Labor Code; Articles 10 and 38(4) of the Private Sector Employees Law (22,23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 455 and 464 of the Penal Code (25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 403, 404, 407, and 408 of the Penal Code (25)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	General Order No. 1 (17)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		General Order No. 1 (17)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 29 of the Provisional Constitution (24)
Compulsory Education Age	No	14‡	Articles 13 and 15 of the General Education Law (26)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 14 of the General Education Law (26)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (26)

Although the Provisional Constitution of 2012 does not provide a minimum age for employment, the 1972 Labor Code establishes age 15 as the minimum age for work. (22) Moreover, although the Labor Code establishes age 12 as the minimum age for light work and describes the conditions under which it may be undertaken, it neither determines the activities in which light work may be permitted nor prescribes the number of hours per week for light work. (22) In addition, the gap between the end of compulsory education and the minimum age for work leaves children aged 14 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school but may not legally work. (26,27) Furthermore, while the 1972 Labor Code enables the publication of a hazardous works list, the government has not determined by regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (5,22)

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Officials in the Somaliland region, which has self-declared independence from the FGS, have criminalized human trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation; its president signed the new trafficking in persons law in June 2022. (9,28,29) However, the FGS lacks legislation prohibiting human trafficking, including of children, or the use of children in illicit activities. Laws prohibiting the commercial sexual exploitation of children also are not sufficient because the use, procuring, and offering of a child for prostitution, pornography, and pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. (22) Furthermore, it appears that under Article 405 of the Criminal Code, children involved in prostitution are not protected from criminal charges. The Penal Code requires extensive updating, an effort that the international community has attempted to support without success. (22) Many fines in the Criminal Code equal less than \$1, which does not serve as an effective deterrent. (9,25)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Somali Police Force (SPF)	Investigates and enforces laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (7) The Counter-Trafficking and Organized Crime Unit has six officers. Recognizes victims of human trafficking based on behavioral indicators and suspicious documents through the SPF's Airport Police Task Force. (30) Operates units dedicated to investigating cases of human trafficking for prosecution through the SPF Criminal Investigation Division. (31,32) In July 2022, Somali police forces received trainings from the UNODC related to countering trafficking in persons. (31)
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA)	Investigates and enforces laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (7) MOLSA's mandate allows for inspections based on requests sent by other authorities such as the police, and inspectors are authorized to issue fines indirectly upon approval of a senior advisor in the ministry. (7) MOLSA's regional office in Banadir employs 35 labor inspectors. (7,31) MOLSA also maintains an Office for the Senior Advisor on Child Labor under its Department of Legal and Labor Relations. The senior advisor, who oversees a staff of six, is charged with drafting and implementing a national action plan to address the worst forms of child labor in Somalia. (8,33,34) MOLSA also coordinates informally with other government ministries on child labor-related issues, including SPF, the National Intelligence and Security Agency, and the Immigration and Naturalization Directorate. (7,31)
Ministry of Defense	Operates separately from civilian law enforcement bodies and leads efforts to eliminate the use of child recruitment and abduction by al-Shabaab. (5) Through the Child Protection Unit, screens Somali National Army units for child soldiers. (7) Raises awareness of child soldier issues and works with international partners and donors to implement standard operating procedures on protecting children associated with armed conflict. (7) Works in concert with SPF, which is responsible for investigating and enforcing laws against the worst forms of child labor. (9)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Somalia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in Somalia may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$0 (4)	\$0 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	35 (4)	35 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (35)	Unknown (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	0 (35)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	N/A (35)	N/A (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (35)	N/A (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (35)	N/A (7)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (35)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (35)	Unknown (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (35)	Unknown (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (4)	No (7)

Research indicates that the Government of Somalia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (7,36,37) The labor inspectorate does not have any dedicated funding and research was not able to confirm if labor inspections were conducted in 2022. (7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Somalia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (38)	Unknown (7)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (38)	Unknown (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (38)	0 (7)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (38)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (4)	No (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9,39)	Yes (7,39)

Somalia is a federal republic comprising five semi-autonomous Federal Member States (FMS), the self-declared breakaway region of Somaliland, and the FGS, which is based in Mogadishu. (40) The FMS command separate police forces and some FMS have separate military forces, which are not under the FGS chain of command. (41,42) Puntland enforcement agencies include the Puntland Ministry of Justice, which prosecutes human trafficking cases and security forces that investigate and enforce human trafficking laws within Puntland. Somaliland police, meanwhile, investigate human trafficking crimes within the Somaliland region. (7) Moreover, the Somaliland Attorney General's Office prosecutes human trafficking cases in the Somaliland region. (7) Federal and regional governments did not provide information on their criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. However, research indicates that Galmudug, Jubaland, and Puntland forces recruited children during the reporting period. (31) In addition, although a general command order barring the recruitment and use of children by the Somali National Army remained in effect during the reporting period, government security forces also recruited and used children in 2022, highlighting gaps in enforcement and uneven command and control of some units. (43) There is no evidence that the FGS or member states prosecuted offenders during the reporting period. (44,45) Moreover, the Juvenile Justice Law of Puntland defines a child as anyone age 14 and under; consequently, the government detained and issued prison sentences, including life imprisonment, to children between the ages of 15 and 18 for their association with armed groups. (13) In addition, the Child Protection Unit does not refer cases relating to child soldiers to the civilian justice system; however, it would theoretically prosecute violations in the military justice system. (5) Detained children have sometimes been interrogated without legal representation and coerced into signing or recording confessions. (13,24,44)

The government, working with UNICEF and other NGOs, has established a limited mechanism for case management, family tracing and reunification, and the provision of social services in response to trafficking in persons and other related worst forms of child labor. (30,39) Despite this effort, Somalia lacks a standardized system to effectively respond to child labor cases. (38)

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IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The FGS has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of a coordination mechanism to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Inter-ministerial Committee on Children and Armed Conflict (ICCAC)	Implements the 2012 Action Plan to Eliminate Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, the Action Plan to End the Killing and Maiming of Children in Contravention of International Law, the 2019 roadmap to end and prevent grave violations against children. (46,47) Co-chaired by the Child Protection Unit and UNICEF, includes other Ministry of Defense officials, representatives of the Ministry of Women and other relevant ministries, and UN officials. (46,47) In 2022, the UN Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) met with ICCAC to establish a joint process to monitor the implementation of the 2019 roadmap. Participants included federal counterparts, the Director Generals and Child Protection Focal Points from the Federal Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development and the Ministries of Defense, Justice, and Internal Security. (46,47) The federal government agreed to lead accountability mechanisms for grave violations identified by the CTFMR. (46,47)

Although Somalia has a coordinating mechanism to address child soldier issues, it does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor, including forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, and herding livestock.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of scope of existing policies to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Employment Policy	Provides the Somali National Tripartite Consultative Committee with a roadmap for improving labor conditions, including stipulations related to child labor. Designed with ILO support under a Joint UN Project on Youth Employment in Somalia that was adopted in February 2019. (5,48) In 2022, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and federal member states in collaboration with the ILO continued preliminary work to conduct an assessment of child labor in Somalia, which will form the basis of a forthcoming National Action Plan to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (8,32) The plan calls for the deployment of a national child labor prevalence survey and numerous stakeholder meetings, including with line ministries from Somalia's federal member states. (8)
UN Child Soldier Action Plans	Establish a strategy for identifying and removing children from the Somali National Army through education and monitoring of military camps. (9) In 2012, FGS committed to two UN action plans to end grave violations against children, including the Action Plan to Eliminate Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and the Action Plan to End the Killing and Maiming of Children in Contravention of International Law. In October 2019, the government committed to a UN Roadmap to expedite the implementation of the two action plans. (49) The adoption of the 2019 Roadmap to Prevent the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict was designed to address grave violations, including recruitment and use. (50) Federal governments, including Southwest and Galmudug, made efforts to implement both the 2012 action plan and the 2019 roadmap in 2022. Somalia's Ministry of Defense, for example, collaborated with other security forces, including the Somali Federal Darwish Police and SPF, on child protection-related issues. (44,45)
Somalia Social Protection Policy	Develops and strengthens components of a national social protection system, including safety net programs. Provisions include a guaranteed income floor for vulnerable households and families with children under age five. (51,52) The tiered policy is designed to protect the poorest strata of society from sinking into destitution, prevent the moderately poor from sliding into extreme poverty, and promote the livelihoods of at-risk populations. (5) The policy focuses, in part, on mitigating the vulnerability of IDPs and other populations to gender-based violence and human trafficking. (4,30) A Shock Responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project was created to implement the Somalia Social Protection Policy. (53) The project provides cash transfers to targeted poor and vulnerable households. As of October 2022, across 880 villages 200,000 households benefited from the project in 21 districts. (53,54)

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Although the government has some policies that address child soldiers, research found no evidence of any policies to address child labor in agriculture, industry, street work, commercial sexual exploitation, or domestic work.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
ACT to Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict†	FGS awareness-raising initiative launched under the auspices of a global UN advocacy campaign highlighting children in armed conflict. (55) Child Protection Units disseminate radio and print media content regarding the prevention of child recruitment and conscription in armed conflict. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period. (7,31)
Donor-Funded Programs	UNICEF partnerships with the FGS Ministry of Defense to address issues related to the recruitment and use of child soldiers in Somalia. (39) Includes the Defectors Reintegration Program that rehabilitates and reintegrates former combatants, emphasizing the specific needs of former child soldiers, including demobilized female combatants and their dependents. (39) Six different centers provide accommodations, medical care, psychological counseling, education, and vocational training to former combatants. (39) In 2022, UNICEF also partnered with the Ministry of Education to ensure that 107,811 children (including 50,095 girls) remained enrolled in 355 primary schools at risk of closure in drought-affected regions. (56)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is partially funded by the FGS. (57)

Although the FGS implemented programs to address child soldiers and child trafficking, research found that existing programs were insufficient to address the scope of other child labor problems, including in street work and forced labor in agriculture.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Somalia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2022
	Clarify whether the pre-1991 Labor Code and Penal Code are still in effect under the Federal Government of Somalia.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be undertaken and limit the number of hours for light work.	2009 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age from 14 to 15 years to be commensurate with the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit using, procuring, and offering a child for prostitution, pornography, and pornographic performances.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that penalties for the commercial sexual exploitation of children are sufficiently stringent to deter violations.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the law protects children involved in commercial sexual exploitation from criminal charges.	2011 – 2022
Criminally prohibit child trafficking for the purposes of labor and sexual exploitation in the Federal and Member States.	2009 – 2022	

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities.	2009 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has dedicated funding.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted at worksites, including unannounced inspections and in targeted sectors in which child labor most frequently occurs.	2021 – 2022
	Institutionalize training for labor inspectors, including by training new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment.	2021 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 35 to 79 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2020 – 2022
	Establish a referral mechanism between the labor inspectorate and social welfare services for children subjected to child labor.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officials receive sufficient training and resources to investigate, prosecute, and convict violators of the worst forms of child labor.	2012 – 2022
	Cease the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Somali Police Force, the National Intelligence and Security Agency, and the Somali National Army, as well as Galmudug, Jubaland, and Puntland forces and all allied militia. Investigate, prosecute, and punish, as appropriate, all commanders who recruit and use children.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that children associated with armed groups are referred to social services providers while ceasing the practices of detaining them with adults, subjecting them to lengthy interrogations without legal representation, eliciting coerced confessions, and imposing long prison terms.	2015 – 2022
Coordination	Establish a robust coordination mechanism that addresses all forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, and herding livestock.	2009 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt policies to address child labor in agriculture, industry, street work, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Adopt a countrywide birth registration system to facilitate the identification of child labor victims.	2019 – 2022
	Conduct a national child labor prevalence survey, including data on the number of children working and attending school.	2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education and make education accessible and safe for all children by removing all armed groups from educational facilities, constructing schools outside Mogadishu, removing enrollment fees, and ensuring that girls, IDP children, and nomadic and rural children have access.	2013 – 2022
	Develop programs to address all forms of child labor, including in street work and forced labor in agriculture. Expand the scope of existing programs to address the use of children in armed conflict, including awareness raising on worst forms of child labor and international standards related to the definition of a child in the context of work and participation in armed conflict.	2009 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken by the ACT to Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict program.	2022

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In 2022, South Africa made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. South Africa hosted the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor, where delegates adopted the Durban Call to Action on Elimination of Child Labor. In addition, in August, the Department of Employment and Labor led a joint multi-departmental inspection effort that resulted in criminal child labor charges. The government also increased the benefit of the Child Support Grant by 4.3 percent and the Foster Care Grant by 1.9 percent, both of which provide direct cash transfers to reduce child vulnerability. However, children in South Africa are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, in forced begging, and use in illicit activities. Social programs are not sufficient to address the scope of child labor, and free basic education is not guaranteed by law.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in South Africa.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	15.0 (1,559,791)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	17.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		91.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Survey of Activities of Young People (SAYP), 2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of corn and fruit (3-5)
Industry	Factory work, including processing cotton to make blankets (6,7)
Services	Food service (3,8)
	Domestic work (3,4)
	Street work, including vending (3,4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,5,9-11)
	Use in illicit activities, including in gang-related activity (12-14)
	Use in the production of pornography (10,15,16)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, street vending, cell phone repair shops, and begging (4,8,11,17,18)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

South Africa is a destination for child trafficking from both Southern Africa and Africa as a whole. (9,11) Young children within South Africa, mostly girls between the ages of 10 and 14 from socioeconomically disadvantaged and rural areas, are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in major cities including Cape Town and Johannesburg. Traffickers often recruit domestic and foreign victims with promises of jobs and economic

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opportunity in urban areas. (9) Research suggests that during the COVID-19 pandemic, traffickers turned to online methods, including social media, to recruit children. (8) Government officials have indicated that child trafficking, primarily for commercial sexual exploitation, rose significantly during the pandemic. (19) South Africa is also considered a major destination for child sex tourism, though the impact of the pandemic likely reduced demand. (8,9) Children, especially boys and children with disabilities, are also subjected to forced begging. (3,4,18)




South African children are also subjected to the worst forms of child labor through recruitment and use in criminal activities. Gangs use child recruits, known as *springbokkies*, to watch for police, transport guns, deliver illicit drugs, and at times, commit acts of violence, including murder. (12-14) This phenomenon is particularly prevalent around Cape Town in the Western Cape. Children under the age of 10 do not have criminal responsibility under South Africa law, so gangs recruit children to reduce the risk of criminal prosecution for their activities. (14) In recent years, there has been a significant rise of murders committed by children, some as young as age 8, affiliated with gangs. (14)

Free basic education is not guaranteed by law. (4,20) While there are designated "no fee" schools and fee exemptions and subsidies for low-income students, research indicates that at some schools, parents must pay for school uniforms and other supplies. (3,4) Other barriers to education include poor school infrastructure, inadequate sanitation and toilets, lack of transportation, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of accommodations for students with disabilities. (21,22)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

South Africa has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in South Africa's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to guarantee by law free basic education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 43 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) (23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Regulations on Hazardous Work by Children in South Africa; Articles 4–10 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (23,24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Regulations on Hazardous Work by Children in South Africa; Articles 4–10 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (23,24)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 48 of the BCEA; Article 13 of the Constitution; Article 141 of the Children's Amendment Act; Sections 4 and 5 of the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2013 (24-27)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 141 of the Children's Amendment Act; Section 4 of the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2013 (26,27)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 141 of the Children's Amendment Act; Chapter 3 of Criminal Law Amendment Act 32 (26,28)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 141 of the Children's Amendment Act (26)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 52 of the Defense Act (29)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 52 of the Defense Act (29)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Chapters 1-2, Articles 1–5 of the South African Schools Act (20)
Free Public Education	No		Chapter 2, Article 5 and Chapter 4, Article 39 of the South African Schools Act (20)

* Country has no conscription (29)

The South African Constitution guarantees a right to education, but free basic education is not guaranteed by law. Article 39 of the South African Schools Act allows certain schools to be designated as "no fee" schools, but all other public schools may charge fees to ensure a sufficient operating budget if a majority of parents at that school vote to do so at the beginning of the year. (20,25,30)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
South African Department of Employment and Labor (SADEL)	Enforces child labor laws by conducting inspections of worksites and operates labor centers throughout the country where complaints may be lodged. (17,31) Refers survivors of labor exploitation to social workers and reports violations to the South African Police Service (SAPS) for further investigation and to the South African Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJ) for prosecution. (17,32,33)
South African Police Service (SAPS)	Enforces the legislative mandate under the Children's Act to investigate cases involving the worst forms of child labor. (17,34,35) Through its Human Trafficking Desk, monitors and evaluates police efforts to investigate human trafficking crimes, trains investigators, and refers human trafficking cases to provincial SAPS units. (36)
South African Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJ)	Responsible for enforcing criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor. (17) Through its Children's Courts, which are housed within every Magistrate's court, adjudicates non-criminal child protection cases involving child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. (37) Through the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), prosecutes criminal cases, including cases of human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor. (17,38)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in South Africa took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the South African Department of Employment and Labor (SADEL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including inadequate allocation of financial resources.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$47 million (17)	\$38.28 million (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	1,853 (17)	1,882 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (24)	No (24)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (17)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (17)	134,488 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (17)	20 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (17)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (17)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (24)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (17)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (17)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (5)

In August 2022, SADEL conducted a joint multi-departmental inspections blitz in Pretoria, leading to the discovery of a child working in a shop. (5,39) As the law in South Africa treats child labor as a criminal offense, labor inspectors may refer child labor cases for criminal prosecution. (17,24) This case was referred to criminal law enforcement. (5,39)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in South Africa took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inadequate training for criminal investigators to identify and investigate child trafficking.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (17)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (17)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (17)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (17)	Unknown (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (10)	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (5)

South Africa's National Trafficking Hotline received 2,408 trafficking reports in 2022, 20 percent of which concerned cases of child trafficking. (5) During the reporting period, the government prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced a woman to 15 years' imprisonment for child trafficking. The accused told the parents of two children from Zimbabwe that the children would be cared for and sent to school, and instead she forced them to beg at intersections. (40) The government also held several trainings on trafficking in persons for criminal law enforcement, including workshops for a total of 460 front line police officers in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape between September and November, and training for a total of 100 prosecutors from the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA). (40)

Research indicates that the South African Police Service (SAPS) lacked sufficient resources to investigate all suspected cases of child trafficking and forced child labor. In recent years, there has been a steady decline in the number of SAPS officers. (10,11,41) Despite assistance from the NGO community with the operation of call centers as part of their complaint mechanism, SAPS reportedly experienced difficulty properly following up on reported cases and identifying victims of human trafficking during law enforcement activities. (3,8,11) In addition, victim identification and referral procedures were not uniformly implemented. Research indicates that in some

provinces, the Department of Social Development only coordinated victim services upon receiving confirmation from SAPS that the individual had been subjected to human trafficking, and as a result, when SAPS did not pursue investigation of a case, trafficking survivors faced obstacles to services provision. (10,11)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including inadequate participation of all relevant agencies in the National Intersectoral Committee on Trafficking in Persons.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Implementation Committee on the Child Labor Program of Action	Supports the implementation of the Child Labor Program of Action. Led by SADEL, and includes representatives from government agencies, organized labor, commercial agriculture, and the ILO. (5,42) In 2022, the committee reconvened for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. (5)

The National Intersectoral Committee on Trafficking in Persons coordinates the government's anti-human trafficking efforts, including efforts to eliminate child trafficking. (43) Research indicates that several member agencies, including SAPS, the Department of Home Affairs, and SADEL, send representatives to meetings of the National Intersectoral Committee on Trafficking in Persons or the Provincial Task Teams but engagement on key issues remains limited. (10)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Labor Program of Action for South Africa, Phase IV (2017–2024)	Serves as the primary policy instrument to prevent and eliminate child labor in South Africa. Provides a reciprocal referral mechanism through which SAPS informs SADEL of suspected child labor cases. (42) Identifies lead agencies in the program, including the Departments of Labor, Basic Education, Justice and Constitutional Development, Social Development, and Water and Sanitation; SAPS; NPA; and Statistics South Africa. The National Child Labor Program did not include a timeframe to meet identifiable benchmarks or to assess the progress and adequacy of implementation efforts. (42) During the reporting period, the South African government extended the policy from 2021 to 2024. (42)
Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons National Policy Framework	Created to support the implementation of the 2013 Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act. Sets a framework for interdepartmental coordination on trafficking issues. (43) Outlines the development of procedures and training programs for police and labor inspectors on human trafficking for labor exploitation, including child labor. Enhances social assistance programs to address the needs of child survivors of human trafficking, including psychological and social support, food and shelter, school and community reintegration, and placement and protection in child and youth care centers. (43) During the reporting period, the government convened two workshops to revise the National Policy Framework for planned update and adoption in 2023. (44)

In 2022, South Africa hosted the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor. Delegates at the Conference adopted the Durban Call to Action, which included commitments to promote decent work, end child labor in agriculture, adopt data-driven and survivor-informed policy and programmatic responses, ensure educational access, expand universal social protections, and increase financing and international cooperation for the elimination of child labor. (45)

Research shows that the government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the South African Education Action Plan or the National Development Plan. (46,47)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Thuthuzela Care Centers†	Government-run crisis centers mandated to provide services to survivors of gender-based violence, including survivors of child trafficking. The centers continued providing services in 2022. (11,40)
Direct Cash Transfer Programs†	Includes the Child Support Grant, which provides monthly unconditional direct cash transfers to help low-income parents and guardians meet the basic needs of their children, and the Foster Care Grant, which provides monthly payments of approximately \$65 (R1050) to caretakers of foster children. (17,48) In 2022, the government continued both programs, increasing the Foster Care Grant benefit by 1.9 percent and the Child Support Grant by 4.3 percent. (5)
National School Nutrition Program†	Provides one or two meals—consisting of a protein, starch, and fruit or vegetable—every school day to about 9.5 million school children. As of 2020, 77 percent of public-school students received meals from this school feeding scheme. (49) The program was active in 2022. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of South Africa.

Although South Africa has programs that target child trafficking and poverty alleviation, it does not have social programs with a mandate to address other worst forms of child labor, including forced begging and the use of children in illicit activities. (3,11)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in South Africa (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish criminal law enforcement data on investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties imposed concerning the worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officials are trained to properly identify cases of the worst forms of child labor and child trafficking.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the South African Police Service has sufficient resources to investigate all suspected cases of child trafficking and forced child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that victim identification and referral mechanisms function effectively to provide services to survivors of child trafficking.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Intersectoral Committee on Trafficking in Persons includes meaningful participation from relevant agencies.	2017 – 2022
Government Policies	Include a timeframe and benchmarks in child labor policies to properly monitor and assess the progress of efforts to eliminate child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the South African Education Action Plan and the National Development Plan.	2013 – 2022
Social Programs	Remove barriers to education by eliminating indirect costs, improving school infrastructure and sanitation, and ensuring accessibility for students with disabilities.	2009 – 2022
	Institute programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and the use of children in illicit activities.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, South Sudan is receiving an assessment of no advancement. Despite initiatives to address child labor, South Sudan is assessed as having made no advancement because it demonstrated complicity in the use of forced child labor. The country's military continued to recruit children, sometimes forcibly, to fight opposition groups, and for use in supporting roles. Otherwise, the government made efforts by extending until 2024 the Comprehensive Action Plan to Prevent All Grave Violations Against Children in South Sudan. In addition, for the first time since the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Labor conducted labor inspections. However, children in South Sudan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in cattle herding. Children also perform dangerous tasks in construction. In 2022, the government did not hold perpetrators of child labor accountable and has yet to ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. In addition, police continued to arrest and imprison children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, rather than treating them as victims.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in South Sudan.

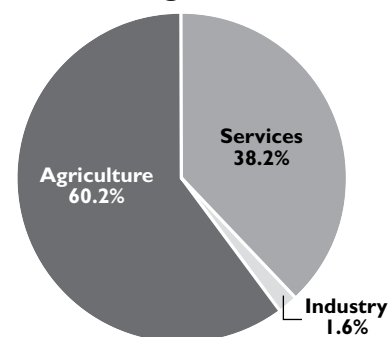
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	45.6 (463,624)
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	31.5
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	10.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		21.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Fifth Housing and Population Census (CENSUS), 2008. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3,4)
	Cattle herding† (3,5)
	Gathering firewood and fetching water (3,4)
Industry	Construction,† including building and transporting materials (5,6)
	Rock breaking† (3,5)
	Making bricks (3,7)
	Gold mining,† including carrying soil and panning (3,4,8)
Services	Domestic work (3-5)
	Street work, including vending; polishing shoes; delivery cart pulling; preparing tea; selling black market gasoline; hawking fruits, sunglasses, and sandals; and ticket taking for group transport companies (3-5)
	Working in restaurants, tea houses, and auto-repair and convenience stores (3,9)
	Collecting scrap metal and empty bottles (6)
	Working in slaughterhouses, including transporting livestock and meat (6)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced labor in brickmaking, cattle herding, gold mining, domestic work, and market vending (3-5)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,5,10)
	Forced recruitment of children by state and non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (3-5,10-13)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In 2022, armed groups continued to use children for combat in armed conflict. Despite the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), ethnic tensions and land disputes continue to drive violent conflict between state and non-state armed groups in the country, exposing children to the worst forms of child labor. (3,14) During the reporting period, state armed groups, including the South Sudan People's Defense Force (SSPDF); South Sudan National Police Services; and South Sudan Wildlife Services, and non-state armed groups including the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO); South Sudan Opposition Alliance; and forces loyal to General Moses Lokujo recruited and used children as combatants, bodyguards, and porters during armed conflict. (14) Children recruited by armed groups lack access to basic services such as water and education, and they are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment, abuse, and further exploitation. (3) Armed groups have previously subjected children to rape and sexual abuse as in-kind payment to fighters. (9) Additionally, state and non-state armed groups recruit children from villages in which conflicts occur. There were also reports of armed groups recruiting children from the government-managed IDP camp in Bentiu during the reporting period. (14)

Of the 10,000 children engaged in tending cattle throughout the country, many are used in armed cattle raids by other tribes. An even greater number of children fight as part of local community defense forces. (4) Children abducted by armed pastoralists may be forced to join heavily militarized cattle rustling networks. Older boys are also forced to work as soldiers, herders, or cattle rustlers. (4,9) While younger children tend to smaller livestock, teenagers serve as auxiliaries for armed pastoralists or self-defense groups. Among certain tribes, cattle raiding marks a rite of passage to adulthood. (15) In addition, non-state groups often use children released from armed groups for cattle raiding, or intercommunal violence once the children arrive back in their villages. (4) Furthermore, economic pressures, including sustained flooding resulting in loss of land, cattle, and intercommunal conflict led to a continued increase in child marriages and child labor during the reporting period. Families with limited financial resources exchanged their young daughters for a bride price, or as restitution following intercommunal conflict. (3,4)




During the reporting period, the South Sudan Education Cluster published the "Education Needs Assessment in South Sudan 2021" in coordination with Save the Children and UNICEF. The report detailed inadequacies within the country's education system, including the chronic underfunding of the sector. (3,16) Although a majority of pre-primary and primary schools have reopened after prolonged pandemic-related closures, the government does not enforce school attendance, and the majority of children leave school before age 13, rendering children vulnerable to child labor and exploitation. (3,17-19) Public school teachers are paid sporadically, leading to low morale, frequent absenteeism, and high teacher attrition. (3,4,18,20,21) In addition, armed groups, including government forces, continue to occupy schools in contested areas, and ongoing military operations in conflict-affected areas have forced teachers to flee. (9,14,20) Although the Constitution and the Child Act provide for free primary education, some schools illegally require families to contribute prohibitive school fees for teachers' and other officials' salaries as well as related costs such as utilities—a practice that the South Sudanese government is taking measures to address. (17,22,23) This practice disproportionately impacts girls, because families with multiple children, who cannot afford to pay additional fees to cover all children, prioritize educating sons. Underage marriage also prevents girls from attending school. (3,4,22)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

South Sudan has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in South Sudan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a gap between the minimum age for work and the compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 12 of the Labor Act; Article 25(3) of the Child Act (24,25)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 12 and 13 of the Labor Act; Articles 22(3), 24(1), and 25(1) of the Child Act (24,25)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 25(2) of the Child Act (24)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 10(1) and 13(2)(a) of the Labor Act; Articles 277–279 of the Penal Code; Article 13 of the Constitution (25-27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 13(2) of the Labor Act; Articles 22(3)(b), 119 and 120 of the Child Act; Articles 276 and 278–282 of the Penal Code (24-26)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 13(2)(b) of the Labor Act; Articles 22(3)(c), 22(3)(d), 22(4), and 25(2)(m) of the Child Act; Article 276 of the Penal Code (24-26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 13(2)(c) of the Labor Act; Article 24(1) of the Child Act; Article 383(3)(d) of the Penal Code (24-26)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 31(1) of the Child Act; Section 22 of the Sudan People's Liberation Army Act (24,28)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 31(1) of the Child Act; Sections 20 and 22(2) of the Sudan People's Liberation Army Act (24,28)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 31(1), 31(2), and 32 of the Child Act (24)
Compulsory Education Age	No	13	Article 9.1(b) of the General Education Act; Article 14(1) of the Child Act (24,29)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 6(a) of the General Education Act; Article 13(4)(b) of the Labor Act; Article 14(1) of the Child Act; Article 29.2 of the Constitution (24,25,27,29)

In accordance with the Labor Act, the Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development (MOL) is responsible for issuing regulations to implement key elements related to child labor, including the number of hours and conditions for light work in which children are able to engage, as well as the exceptions under which children ages 16 and 17 may engage in hazardous work. However, MOL has not issued these regulations, which leaves children vulnerable to exploitative work. (21,25) In addition, as children are only required to attend school until age 13, children between the ages of 13 and 14 are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor because they are not required to be in school, but are also not legally permitted to work. (11,24,25,29)

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III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws, including the absence of coordination between agencies, lack of defined mandates, and an overall lack of prioritization of child labor issues.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws, identifies child labor violations, and conducts workplace inspections. (3,24,25) Refers violations of child labor laws to the South Sudan National Police Service, which then investigates the violation and determines whether to charge the violator in criminal court. During the reporting period, MOL resumed labor inspections. (3)
Ministry of Justice	Oversees all courts and prosecutes violations, including those related to child labor. (4) Partners with the UNICEF-funded initiative Justice for Children, which refers victims of child labor to special courts in which judges are trained on how to adjudicate cases involving minors. This initiative was active during the reporting period; however, research was unable to find information on the number of children diverted from criminal prosecutions in 2022. (3) South Sudan's justice system faces enormous challenges, such as low capacity, insufficient funding, interference by the government and SSPDF, insufficient training for law enforcement personnel, and a scarcity of judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. (30-32) Previous reports indicate that prosecutors and law enforcement officials are not familiar with the legal statutes regarding the worst forms of child labor, which resulted in the imprisonment of children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation. (21,30)
South Sudan People's Defense Force (SSPDF) Directorate for Child Protection	Responsible for preventing the recruitment of children into the army, monitoring barracks, identifying child soldiers and assisting with their release, investigating allegations of child soldiering, and providing training on children's rights to child protection officers and members of SSPDF. Headed by a Brigadier General, serves as a liaison between SSPDF and the international community. (20) Research was unable to identify activities undertaken by the SSPDF Directorate for Child Protection to address child labor during the reporting period.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, the exceptionally low number of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in South Sudan may impede the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (4)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	12 (4)	14 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (25)	No (25)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	0 (4)	21 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	N/A (4)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (4)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (4)	0 (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (4)	No (3,32)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (4)	No (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (25)	Yes (25)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (4)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (4)	No (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (3)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Finance and Planning did not provide any regular funding to MOL for labor inspections. MOL is authorized to retain 20 percent of the fees it collects for work permits, and 20 percent of the fines it collects for labor law violations; MOL divides this revenue between the five directorates

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within the ministry to pay for basic necessities such as utilities and some salaries. (3) No labor law violations were discovered during the reporting period, leaving the ministry without sufficient funding. (3,4) All inspections during the reporting period took place in the capital as there was no budget for inspectors to travel elsewhere in South Sudan. Most inspections were conducted in the hospitality sector, specifically hotels, where children are not known to work. (3) MOL lacks sufficient resources, including vehicles, to investigate child labor complaints, particularly in the informal sector. (3,21,33) Research also indicates that South Sudan does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,34,35) In addition, there is a high level of absenteeism among ministry staff, and salaries for civil servants in nearly every ministry were not paid for several months, further hindering the labor inspectorate's ability to enforce child labor laws. (20,21)

In 2022, labor inspectors were trained on the application of existing child labor and hazardous child labor laws. (3) While labor inspectors in South Sudan are not authorized to assess penalties, they can issue compliance notices requiring the violating business to remedy the violation; however, regulations do not specify monetary penalties for infractions. Labor inspectors can also refer cases to the police and any violations to the Labor Act, including child labor violations, can carry criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to 5 years. (3,4,25)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in South Sudan took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (4)	No (3)
Number of Investigations	0 (4)	0 (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (4)	0 (3)
Number of Convictions	0 (4)	0 (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (4)	No (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (3)	No (3)

Although the August 2013 Punitive Order commits the SSPDF to hold its military officers accountable for the recruitment or use of children, and the government continued to release child soldiers during the reporting period, the government has neither investigated nor prosecuted officers who allegedly committed such crimes, despite ongoing evidence of officer involvement in and knowledge of child recruitment. (3,5,30,36,37) Research indicates that the budget allocated to agencies responsible for criminal law enforcement is insufficient, resulting in investigators lacking sufficient transportation and logistic necessities to carry out investigations related to the worst forms of child labor. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a coordination mechanism to address all worst forms of child labor.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC)	Oversees and coordinates the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former child soldiers, and is supported by the UN Mission in South Sudan, UNICEF, and the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting. Includes members of the pro-Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army – In Opposition (SPLA-IO), and the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), along with parties belonging to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). (20) Maintains a network of local contacts (NGOs and community members) throughout the country who work to locate the families of rescued child soldiers, provide them with vocational training, and assist with their reintegration into civilian life. The NDDRC is currently governed by the Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan Regarding Children Associated with Armed Conflict in South Sudan, which was signed on February 7, 2020, by all parties of the R-ARCSS. (9) Despite not receiving funding during the reporting period, the NDDRC was able to function, and was a driving force behind the May 2022 meeting with stakeholders to extend the Comprehensive Action Plan. (3,4)

The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM) monitors compliance with the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and supports the NDDRC's mandate of reintegrating former child soldiers into civilian life. During the reporting period, the CTSAMVM investigated and reported on cases of suspected child soldiers, and incidents of gender-based violence against women and children by armed militia groups, including militia groups receiving material support from political elites. (3,38,39) In June of 2022, President Salva Kiir issued a decree on the formation of the National Human Rights Council, which will be chaired by the Minister of Justice, and will include the ministers of International Cooperation, Foreign Affairs, Defense, Interior, Gender, Child and Social Welfare, as well as the Child Protection Directorate. (14) In addition, South Sudan has a Technical Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons to oversee the process of ratifying the Palermo Protocol and policy development for anti-trafficking and smuggling of migrants. Members include the Ministry of Justice (co-chair); Ministry of the Interior (co-chair); the National Security Service – Internal Security Bureau; MOL; and the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare (MGCSW). (40) The Task Force met during the reporting period, even though it did not receive funding from the government. (3,4)

Although South Sudan has a coordinating mechanism to address child soldier issues, it does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other worst forms of child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of policies covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (2018) (R-ARCSS)	Replaces all components of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including the extension of the Action Plan to Combat the Use of Child Soldiers, and reaffirms commitments made under the 2017 Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities. (41-43) Establishes the structure of a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and outlines actions to be taken by signatories, including prohibiting the recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed forces or militias, and stipulates that all civilian areas, including schools, shall be immediately demilitarized. (41) Research was unable to determine whether activities relevant to children were undertaken to implement R-ARCSS during the reporting period.
General Education Strategic Plan (2017–2022)	Aimed to improve access to, and quality of, education through grants and cash transfers to girls in upper primary and secondary schools, as well as payment of teachers' salaries. (44) The public education system in South Sudan is highly dependent on donor funding, but during the reporting year, the government announced that education spending will increase to 17 percent of the budget in fiscal year 2022/23, up from the 6.1 percent allocated in fiscal year 2021/22. (3,21)
Comprehensive Action Plan to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children in South Sudan	Aims to prevent and mitigate grave violations against children, including the recruitment of child soldiers and attacks on schools. Applies to all state and non-state groups and came into force under the February 2020 transitional government. (9,45) Parties who have signed on to this commitment include SSPDF and Riek Machar's SPLA-IO, both of which were reported for child recruitment and use in armed conflict, as well as SSOA. (45) This document contains a list of concrete steps meant to "halt and prevent the violations against children in situations of armed conflict." (9,45) In 2022, the R-ARCSS signatories agreed to extend the plan through April 2024. (3)

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During the reporting period, MGCSW drafted their 5-year strategic plan for 2022–2027. The plan has eight strategic areas, including child protection and promotion of the rights of children. (46) However, although South Sudan has policies addressing education, and the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, research found no evidence of policies to address child labor in the agriculture and livestock sectors, nor could research identify policies addressing other worst forms of child labor, such as the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (47)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including a lack of social programs to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Dallaire Initiative (2018–2022)	Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative-funded project (\$2.2 million) aimed to train 1,200 South Sudanese soldiers, police, and prison personnel on addressing the use of children in armed conflict through behavior change. (19) In 2022, the Institute concluded its program to train and educate security sector personnel on child protection issues. (3)
UNICEF and Donor-Funded Programs	During the reporting period, UNICEF and its partners reached 38,163 children in at-risk communities with key messages on Explosive Ordnance Risk Education. (13) 52,796 children were reached with psychosocial support services in child-friendly spaces, schools, and communities. In addition, UNICEF and partners scaled up to provide emergency education services to 119,401 children impacted by the humanitarian crises. (13) This included the construction of 81 temporary learning spaces and 1 secondary school in Greater Pibor Administrative Area, Unity, Jonglei, Warrap, Northern Bahr El Ghazal, and Eastern Equatoria State. Additionally, UNICEF, through EU funding, made two rounds of incentive payments to 8,114 teachers in hard-to-reach areas across the country. (13)
Alternative Education System	Aims to improve literacy and provide out-of-school populations an alternative to formal education. (44) Includes the Accelerated Learning Program, which implements the Ministry of General Education and Instruction program primarily targeting children ages 13 to 17 who have reenrolled in lower primary classes. Also includes Community Girls' Schools, located in closer proximity to rural communities, and the Pastoralist Education Program, which targets children and adults in pastoral areas. (44) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken through the system during the reporting period. (32)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

Although South Sudan has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in commercial sexual exploitation, the agricultural sector, and other sectors in which child labor is known to occur. In addition, the reintegration and rehabilitation services provided to child soldiers is insufficient to meet existing needs. (17,21,48,49)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in South Sudan (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the Ministry of Labor drafts and issues regulations to implement key elements related to child labor, including the number of hours and conditions for light work, and the exceptions under which children ages 16 and 17 may engage in hazardous work.	2020 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age of 13 to the minimum age for work of 14 to comply with international standards.	2013 – 2022
Enforcement	Report activities undertaken by all agencies responsible for child labor law enforcement on an annual basis, including those undertaken by the Ministry of Justice and the South Sudan People's Defense Force Directorate for Child Protection.	2022
	Ensure that victims of commercial sexual exploitation and other worst forms of child labor are correctly identified as victims and are referred to appropriate social services, rather than being treated as criminals.	2012 – 2022

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish data related to labor law enforcement, including the amount of funding provided for the labor inspectorate.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that the Ministry of Finance and Planning provides the Ministry of Labor with regular and sufficient funding for labor inspections that covers all operational costs needed to conduct routine labor inspections, including inspections targeting all sectors in which child labor is known to occur, such as in the informal sector and outside of the capital city.	2012 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 14 to 109 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 4.3 million people.	2016 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to assess penalties for child labor violations and ensure that labor regulations provide monetary penalties for child labor infractions that are high enough to serve as a deterrent.	2019 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to receive child labor complaints and ensure that routine inspections are conducted by the labor inspectorate.	2022
	Ensure that the criminal justice system has adequate funding to recruit sufficient personnel—including judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys—and is able to conduct investigations into child labor violations and implementing regulations for child labor-related laws. Ensure independence of the justice system by eliminating interference by government officials and armed groups, including the national armed forces.	2022
	Establish a formal referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services for victims of the worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that training related to the worst forms of child labor is provided to criminal investigators and prosecutors and that prison sentences for child labor crimes are imposed and carried out.	2015 – 2022
	Investigate, prosecute, and impose penalties on perpetrators, including government officials, who recruit or use children in armed conflict.	2013 – 2022
	End the forced and voluntary recruitment or use of children by state and non-state armed groups, including the South Sudan People's Defense Force and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Army – In Opposition, in compliance with the Child's Act.	2012 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Technical Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons is active, sufficiently funded, and able to carry out its intended mandates, including ratifying the Palermo Protocol and developing policies to address trafficking of migrant workers.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission is active and able to assist rescued child soldiers by locating their families, providing them with vocational training, and assisting with their reintegration into civilian life.	2021 – 2022
	Establish a coordinating mechanism to address all worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and ensure that its mandates are clearly defined.	2013 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that signatories of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and of the Comprehensive Action Plan to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children in South Sudan do not continue to recruit or re-recruit children, and that actions are taken to demilitarize civilian areas, including schools.	2021 – 2022
	Adopt policies to address child labor in all sectors in which it is known to occur, particularly in the agriculture and livestock sectors, as well as all relevant worst forms of child labor such as commercial sexual exploitation.	2022
Social Programs	Conduct a national child labor survey, including research to determine the activities carried out by children in all sectors in which children are known to work, to inform policies and social programs.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that children complete their primary education by adequately funding the sector, enforcing school attendance, reliably paying teachers' salaries, addressing the lack of school infrastructure, and by withdrawing government forces from occupied schools.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Alternative Education System—including its Accelerated Learning Program, Community Girls' Schools, and the Pastoralist Education Program—all of which aim to improve literacy and provide out-of-school populations an alternative approach to formal education.	2021 – 2022
	Increase the scope of social programs to reach more children at risk of child labor, including those involved in commercial sexual exploitation, agricultural work, and work with livestock, as well as those from low-income families, those living in rural areas, and girls.	2012 – 2022
	Continue to cooperate with child protection agencies, pursuant to Article 2.1.10 of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, to disarm and immediately release children in armed groups and transfer them to appropriate social services providers. Ensure that the rehabilitation services provided to child soldiers are sufficient.	2014 – 2022

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In 2022, Sri Lanka made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government amended the Children and Young Persons Ordinance to raise the age of majority from 16 to 18 to align this law with international standards. The government worked with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to implement a \$34 million campaign to support children's school attendance, nutrition, and safety in response to the economic crisis. The Sri Lankan Police also made criminal law enforcement data related to the worst forms of child labor publicly available for the first time. However, children in Sri Lanka are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced domestic work. Research indicates that some children in rural areas face barriers to accessing education, including difficulties in traveling to school, an inadequate number of teachers, and challenges with registration. Furthermore, the labor inspectorate lacked sufficient staffing and funding to carry out an adequate number of inspections, including in factories in the northern and eastern provinces.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Sri Lanka.

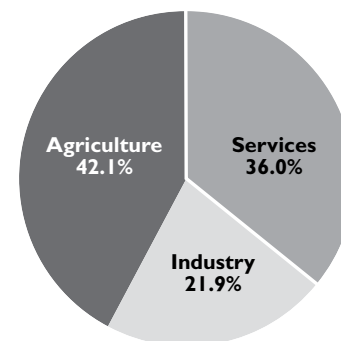
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	0.8 (28,515)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	98.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	0.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		98.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Child Activity Survey (CAS), 2016. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including raising livestock (3-7)
	Fishing, including deep-sea fishing,† processing fish, and selling fish (3,4,6-10)
Industry	Manufacturing, including textiles and garments, and food processing (3,4,6,7,11)
	Mining† and construction† (3,4,6-9,11)
Services	Domestic work (3,4,6,7,9,12)
	Vending, in stores and on the streets, and begging (3,4,6-9)
	Working in hotels, restaurants, and offices (6)
	Providing security for people and property (8)
	Transportation (4)
	Painting and washing of buildings (8)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,9,12-15)
	Forced domestic work (5,12)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (5,12,16,17)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

During the reporting period, a severe economic crisis and an associated food emergency led to increased reports of children engaging in child labor and decreased school attendance. (8,18-21) According to the Sri Lankan Department of Labor, children living in coastal and agricultural areas, mining areas, and firewood-producing areas were vulnerable to child labor. (9,22) Cases of debt distress for housing and accommodation expenses were documented among workers, many of whom also faced ethnic discrimination, at private, smallholding tea estates, which increased the risk of child labor in the tea sector. (4,9,23) Smallholder farmers faced increased labor and production costs and labor shortages during harvest times, and often relied on children under the age of 12 to help during the harvest period. (24)







There are reports of children subjected to child trafficking internally, including from tea estates, to perform domestic work in Colombo. In addition, child domestic workers are subjected to sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, non-payment of wages, and restrictions of movement. (5,9) Children, predominantly boys, are also forced into commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, in tourist areas as part of the sex tourism industry. (4,8,9,13,15,25) Mobile apps with GPS are increasingly being used to indicate availability of minors for commercial sexual exploitation. (4,26) There are also reports of sexual exploitation of children at state-run orphanages. (12)

Although the government provides free, compulsory education, some children face barriers to accessing education due to a lack of transportation and an inadequate number of teachers. There are a lack of high schools in some rural areas, and children are particularly vulnerable to leaving school early. (8,9) Additionally, there have been reports that children who are unable to provide birth certificates, such as children born abroad to Sri Lankan mothers and non-Sri Lankan fathers, are denied access to education. (8) The 2016 Child Activity Survey’s definition of child labor does not align with international standards because children ages 5 to 11 working less than 15 hours per week and children ages 12 to 14 working less than 25 hours per week in agriculture are not counted as child laborers. These issues may have led to an underestimation of the population of children in child labor in the Child Activity Survey. (6) In 2022, government officials began discussion of the questionnaire for the next Child Activity Survey. (8)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Sri Lanka has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Sections 7, 9, 13, and 34 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act; Section 6 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Amendment Act; Section 2 of the Shop and Office Employees (Regulation of Employment and Remuneration) (Amendment) Act; Sections 2–7 of the Factories (Amendment) Act; Sections 2–4 of the Minimum Wages (Indian Labor) (Amendment) Act (27-31)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 20A of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations Regulations No. 01; Section 20A of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (27,32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 358A, 360C, 360A(2), and 360A(4) of the Penal Code (33)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 360C, 360A(2), and 360A(4) of the Penal Code (33)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 286A, 360B, 360A(2), and 360A(4) of the Penal Code (33)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 288, 288A, 288B, and 360C of the Penal Code (33)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Sections 20A and 31 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (27)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		358(1)(d) of the Penal Code; Sections 20A and 31 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (27,33)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 43 of the Education Ordinance; Compulsory Attendance of Children at Schools Regulation No. 1 of 2015 (34,35)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 47 of the Education Ordinance (34)

* Country has no conscription (36)

During the reporting period, the government amended the Children and Young Persons Ordinance to define individuals under 18 years old as children in line with international standards. (37) This change enables children under age 18, previously age 16, to be treated as minors in the criminal justice system and be eligible for government services designated for children. (38-41)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor, in the Ministry of Labor and Foreign Employment (MOLFE)	Enforces labor laws related to the employment of children and young persons, including overseeing the labor inspectorate and the Women and Children's Affairs Division. Receives public complaints of child labor lodged in national and district-level offices. (3,8,9,42) Receives complaints from other state organizations, including from the National Child Protection Authority. Conducts special investigations of child labor and hazardous labor, and takes legal action as necessary. (3,9) In 2022, investigated 145 complaints of child labor and hazardous child labor, resulting in 11 confirmed violations. Children were referred for assistance to relevant care organizations, including the Department of Probations and Child Care Services and the respective Divisional Secretariats. (8) During the reporting period, MOLFE incorporated actions from the National Child Protection Authority's action plan into its own operations and began establishing a Forced Labor Task Force, with one meeting held in 2022. Also strengthened the national coordination mechanism for child labor through Alliance 8.7. (8,43) Moreover, conducted a public awareness campaign about the elimination of child labor, including producing a theme song and documentary that was broadcast over the national state channel in both Sinhala and Tamil and shared via social media. Additionally, implemented a SMS messaging campaign on minimum age and hazardous employment and partnered with human resources and management faculties of government and government-approved universities to educate undergraduate students on laws, including child labor laws. (8,43)
Sri Lankan Police	The Children and Women's Bureau of the Sri Lankan Police enforces laws on child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and the use of children in illicit activities. (5) Also supervises the National Child Protection Authority Special Police Investigation Unit, which has approximately 40 police officers who investigate complaints and enforce criminal laws involving children, including complaints of child labor and the worst forms of child labor. (5,8,9,38,44) Has approximately 300 child protection officers based in the districts who are tasked with preventing child exploitation and protecting survivors. (9) The Criminal Investigations Department of the Sri Lanka Police investigates cases and reports outcomes to magistrates. (8) The Criminal Investigations Department also prepares indictments and forwards cases to the relevant High Court. The Attorney General's Office is responsible for prosecution in the High Court. (8) In 2022, the National Child Protection Authority conducted 13 information sessions with hotel owners and personnel to improve awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children during travel. (38) Also sent some staff to participate in a 2-day training on forensic interviewing and worked with Save the Children to conduct research and develop training materials on child trafficking. (8,38)
National Anti-Human Trafficking Taskforce	Coordinates interagency efforts to address all human trafficking issues, including commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Falls under the Ministry of Defense's National Intelligence Division and is chaired by the Chief of National Intelligence. Includes representatives from a range of government agencies, including the Ministry of Social Services, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Department of Labor, National Child Protection Authority, Department of Probation and Child Care, Police Criminal Division, and Bureau for the Prevention of Abuse to Women and Children. (38,44)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Sri Lanka took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Foreign Employment that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,933,333 (4)	\$1,414,103 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	570 (4)	587 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	71,246 (43,45)	70,089 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	7 (8)	11 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	1 (4)	2 (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	3 (4)	2 (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (8,43)

Following amendments in 2021 to increase the minimum age of employment to age 16, in 2022, Department of Labor officers were issued implementing guidance on the minimum age for work. (8) Moreover, 68 labor inspectors from all regional offices participated in a training on the amendments and 28 labor inspectors attended a 2-day workshop on labor laws and court procedures, including those related to child labor. In addition, 90 Department of Labor officers, 45 police officers, and 45 probation officers attended 4 training programs on child labor, hazardous child labor, and child trafficking. (8)

The labor inspectorate is not authorized to assess penalties. Penalties for child labor law violations are available under the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act, instead of under the authority of the labor inspectorate. (8,27) Penalties include a maximum fine of up to \$50 and up to 12 months' imprisonment. The magistrate's court levies any fines, imprisonment, or compensation for the child victim. (4) The fine is collected by the registrar's office of the court, and compensation is given to the guardian of the child or deposited in a bank account under the child's name. (8) While in practice there is coordination and an informal referral mechanism between the National Child Protection Authority and the Department of Labor, there is not a formal coordination system. Moreover, there are gaps and delays in referrals between the police and the Department of Labor. (8,43) During the reporting period, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) began conducting a mapping of the referral mechanism and an assessment of the complaint mechanism. (8) Additionally, although the hazardous occupations list includes domestic work, labor inspectors only have the authority to inspect private residences for violations against child domestic workers if a complaint was received. (4,12) Routine inspections, especially of factories in the northern and eastern provinces, were limited by insufficient staffing, insufficient budget, and a fuel shortage. (4,8,9,12,46)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Sri Lanka took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of resources to carry out investigations.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (4)	19 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	3 (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	0 (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (4)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (8)

In 2022, the Children and Women's Bureau of the Sri Lankan Police conducted an exercise to identify children engaged in begging in four locations. Children were removed from their locations and referred to the appropriate social services. (8) During the reporting period, Sri Lankan Police investigated three cases related to forced child labor, seven cases related to child commercial sexual exploitation, and nine cases related to the use of children in illicit activities. The Sri Lankan Police made these disaggregated criminal data available for the first time. (8)

The government arrested 41 people in a high-profile child sex trafficking case in 2021, including 1 Deputy Chairman of a local divisional council, 2 police officers, and a Navy officer; however, the investigation is still paused. (4,43,47,48) There are isolated reports that a lack of awareness and misunderstanding of human trafficking led some local authorities to arrest or detain child sex trafficking survivors for alleged unlawful acts committed as a direct result of trafficking without proper screening; however, the government did not penalize child human trafficking survivors for unlawful acts that traffickers compelled them to commit when survivors were properly identified. (12,25,46) Moreover, research found that investigators did not have adequate facilities to conduct investigations and record evidence, such as computers and transportation, or human resources to carry out investigations. (3,4,8,9,49)

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IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on Child Labor Elimination	Coordinates efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor, including the implementation of the National Policy on the Elimination of Child Labor in Sri Lanka. Chaired by the Secretary of MOLFE and includes representatives from key government agencies, employers' and workers' organizations, ILO, UNICEF, and NGOs. (8,9) In 2022, convened one time and discussed consolidating agencies' individual action plans and increasing implementation of the Child Labor-Free Zone model. (8,43)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy on the Elimination of Child Labor in Sri Lanka	Aims to mainstream child labor issues into national development policies, improve enforcement, and support collaboration with key stakeholders. (50) During the reporting period, the Women and Children's Affairs Division of the Department of Labor implemented awareness raising and training activities as outlined in this policy. (8,43)
National Child Protection Policy	Established by the National Child Protection Authority as a measure to address issues faced by children, including reducing sexual exploitation of children during travel in Sri Lanka. (3,9,43) During the reporting period, conducted an education awareness campaign and began consulting stakeholders on commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism sector. (51)
ILO Decent Work Country Program (2018–2022)	Detailed the priorities and outcomes required to make progress towards the goal of decent work for all. Identified key areas of work for the eradication of child labor by 2022, including operationalizing the Child Labor-Free Zone model in additional districts, expanding the inspection system to cover child labor in the informal sector, raising the minimum age for employment to age 16, revising regulations on hazardous child labor, improving the complaints and referral mechanisms, and regularly collecting data on child labor. (52) During 2022, the existing Decent Work Country Program was extended. (8)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (8,53,54)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate funding to address child labor in all regions.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Child Labor-Free Zone Model†	Local government initiatives that seek to eliminate child labor through the identification of children engaged in child labor, a rehabilitation program, assistance to families of children at risk of engaging in child labor, and an awareness-raising campaign. Operated by district secretariats with assistance from the Department of Labor and with technical and financial support from ILO. (9) During the reporting period, existing programming was continued in four districts; however, expansion was paused. (8)
Humanitarian Action for Children*	\$34 million UNICEF-led campaign to support children's school attendance, nutrition, and safety in response to the economic crisis. In 2022, provided educational materials to over 285,000 children, provided cash transfers for 3,000 families, and enabled access to the 1929 Helpline for 2,000 people. (21)
'1929' Childline Sri Lanka‡	National Child Protection Authority-funded and operated 24-hour toll-free emergency telephone service for vulnerable and abused children. Connects children in need of help to direct assistance and rehabilitation services. (3,55) Reported to be active during 2022. (55)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Sri Lanka.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4,8,9,21,56)

The Provincial Department of Probation and Child Care Services operates 379 childcare institutions that provide services such as access to basic needs, pediatric and psychiatric care, and educational services for children involved in child exploitation cases, including cases related to the worst forms of child labor. (38,43) In 2022, the Department of Labor entered into an MOU with the Malinan Gold Marie Nidahase Ran Daruwo Fund to financially support families of children previously engaging in child labor and families identified as vulnerable to child labor by providing educational scholarships to the child and support to families to start a business. (8)

However, due to the economic crisis and the government's reduction in budgets, some state school meal programs ended. (8)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Sri Lanka (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Provide investigators with additional funding and adequate resources—including transportation, fuel, computers, facilities to record evidence, and human resources—to adequately investigate forced labor, child trafficking, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2011 – 2022
	Provide adequate staffing in the northern and eastern provinces for the labor inspectorate to carry out inspections.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors have the authority to inspect private residences for violations against child workers if they have reasonable suspicion of child labor violations occurring, regardless of whether an official complaint is received.	2021 – 2022
	Address the delays and gaps in referrals between the Department of Labor, National Child Protection Authority, and Sri Lankan Police.	2022
Social Programs	Ensure that the definition of child labor used in national child labor surveys to calculate child labor statistics aligns with international standards so that the estimated population of children in child labor in the Child Activity Survey is correct.	2017 – 2022
	Improve access to education by addressing difficulties with transportation to schools, teacher shortages, an inadequate number of high schools in rural areas, and barriers related to enrollment documents.	2012 – 2022
	Reinstate school meal programs in order to support school attendance.	2022
	Institute programs to address vulnerabilities to child labor, particularly for ethnic minorities, in tea estates and in coastal, agricultural, mining, and firewood-producing areas.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure the continued implementation and expansion of key social programs to address child labor in line with the Decent Work Country Program, including the Child Labor-Free Zone Model.	2022

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In 2022, Suriname made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Commission on Combating Child Labor translated television and radio programs into six languages and held awareness-raising sessions on child labor. The government also increased the number of convictions it secured for child labor crimes and signed bilateral and regional enforcement arrangements with French Guiana, Brazil, and Guyana that included language on joint efforts to combat cross-border criminal activities, including human trafficking. In addition, the government launched a program to provide inclusive access to all levels of education, with a specific focus on children in the interior and improving the quality of lower secondary education. However, children in Suriname are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in gold mining. The compulsory education age does not reach the minimum age for employment, leaving some children vulnerable to labor exploitation. In addition, while Suriname's laws criminalize sexual acts with a minor under 16, they do not criminally prohibit the use of a child under 16 for commercial sex. The government did not report the number of child labor inspections it conducted.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Suriname. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	7.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		80.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting crops and applying pesticides† (3,4)
	Forestry† (3,5,6)
	Fishing and hunting (5,6)
Industry	Gold mining† (3-6)
	Construction† (3,4)
	Wood processing† (3,7)
Services	Street work, including vending (3,5)
	Domestic work (5)
	Airport luggage transportation† (8)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,6,8)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, including in informal mining camps in Suriname's remote interior. (7,9,10) In the capital of Paramaribo, children engage primarily in street vending. In addition, children work in small-scale gold mines in the southeast region of the country, in which they risk exposure to mercury and cyanide. (7) Children have also been reported to be working in small-scale construction and wood processing companies outside Paramaribo. (7,11) Migrant populations, especially those with irregular status residing in the country, are particularly vulnerable to both sex and labor trafficking due to challenges associated with their precarious legal status. (12,13) Children also resort to selling goods along busy roadways and take on informal jobs in other sectors, leaving them vulnerable and exposed to dangerous equipment, chemicals, and unregulated working conditions. (3)




Although Suriname’s net attendance percentage for primary school is high, it drops significantly for secondary school. Research indicates that there are disparities in education completion rates based on geographic and socioeconomic status, and that secondary school completion rates in the interior are as low as 15 percent. (14) Limited economic opportunities and inequality require children to work rather than continue their education (3,15,14) Children in the interior faced more barriers to education as many schools in the region opened significantly later than schools in the coastal area after nation-wide COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted. These schools also did not develop adequate plans to ensure that students caught up on materials and classes missed due to the pandemic. (3) Furthermore, flooding in the interior led to additional school closures, and the high cost of transportation was an obstacle for attendance. (3,16)

Although children who are not citizens of Suriname can access free public education if they provide a birth certificate and vaccination records, there is limited reporting of instances in which children were denied access to education due to incomplete paperwork or their citizenship and residency status. These cases were reported among the Guyanese population in Suriname’s western border district, Nickerie, and the Brazilian population in Paramaribo. (3,8,17,18) Research suggests that families residing illegally in the country have also kept their children out of school to avoid being reported to authorities. (3)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Suriname has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Suriname's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including an age for compulsory education that is less than the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 1 (j–l), 3, and 11 of the Children and Young Persons Labor Act (19)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 (k and l) and 11 of the Children and Youth Persons Labor Act; Article 1 of the Decree on Hazardous Labor for Youth (19,20)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2 and 3 of the Decree on Hazardous Labor for Youth; Article 11 of the Children and Youth Persons Labor Act (19,20)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 334, 338, and 339 of the Penal Code; Article 15 of the Constitution; Article 1 of Law on Labor for Children and Young Persons (19,21,22)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 307 and 334 of the Penal Code (22)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 291, 293, 297, 298, 303a, and 306 of the Penal Code (22)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 9 of the Conscription Act (23)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No	12	Article 39 of the Constitution; Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education (21,24)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 38 and 39 of the Constitution (21)

* Country has no conscription (25)

Suriname's laws do not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation of children because while it is criminal to have a sexual relationship with a child under the age of 16, the use of a child under age 16 for commercial sex is not criminally prohibited. In addition, while the Penal Code establishes penalties for the production and trafficking of drugs, it does not specifically prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of a child in the production and trafficking of drugs. (22) Moreover, Article 20 of the Law on Basic Education requires children to attend school only until they are 12 years old. (24) This makes children ages 12 to 16 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor because they are not legally required to attend school nor are they legally permitted to work.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor, Employment Opportunity and Youth Affairs (MOL)	Enforces laws related to child labor. (3,4) Reports suspected forced labor cases, including the worst forms of child labor, within 45 minutes of identification to the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Unit of the Suriname Police Force. (4) Contains the Labor Inspectorate, which is required to report alleged cases of child labor and forced labor to the police. (3)
Suriname Police Force	Enforces criminal laws related to child labor. (3) Includes the Youth Affairs Police, who cover law enforcement involving children under age 18 and are jointly responsible for child labor-related crimes. Also includes the TIP Unit, which investigates reports and allegations of human trafficking and forced sexual exploitation nationwide, including cases involving children. (7,11,26) The TIP Unit scaled up its collaboration with the Immigration Unit of the Military Police to support the identification of suspected cases arriving at the Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport. During the reporting period, the TIP Unit scheduled two trips to the interior, where it conducted inspections of night clubs in mining areas, provided awareness sessions on human trafficking and smuggling, and established collaborations with local and tribal leadership. (27) The TIP Unit along with representatives of the Prosecutors' Office regularly inspect clubs and brothels. (27)
Prosecutor's Office	Investigates and prosecutes human trafficking cases, and enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,4) The TIP Desk of the Prosecutors' Office works closely with the TIP Unit of the Police during the investigation of cases. (27)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Suriname took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	50 (8)	50 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	2,423 (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (8)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (8)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (8)	0 (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (3)

During the reporting period, the MOL increased its collaboration with the District Commissioner's Office of Brokopondo and trained staff at that office to conduct labor inspections on its behalf. The Ministry has been collaborating with different community organizations and is seeking their support in identifying potential instances of child labor. (3) In December, the Brazil School for Labor Inspection gave a 2-day training on data generation, labor inspection, local coordination between stakeholders as it relates to child labor, and the execution of the national policy to combat child labor. Participants in the training included labor inspectors, members of the National Commission to Combat Child Labor, representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, representatives from labor unions, representatives from a gold mining company, and staff from the District Commissioner's Office of Brokopondo. (3)

No data on the number of labor inspections were provided for the reporting period, but the MOL confirmed that the number of inspections decreased significantly compared to 2021 as the COVID-19 Cluster Team, which was led by the labor inspectorate, was disbanded. (3) The labor inspectorate lacked both sufficient inspectors and

equipment to conduct necessary labor inspections. (3,4,15) Most inspections were unannounced, in the formal sector, and centered around the coastal area. Labor inspectors check for child labor in targeted sectors and must be accompanied by police with a special warrant to inspect private homes or farms. No children were removed from child labor as a result of inspections during the reporting period. (3)

In June, a review of the reciprocal referral mechanism was conducted and identified several obstacles, including that the mechanism is not sufficient to provide long-term solutions to child labor issues that are reported. (3,8) The Ministries of Social Affairs and Labor, with support of UNICEF and other stakeholders, began drafting new policies to strengthen referral mechanisms. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Suriname took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (8)	No (3)
Number of Investigations	2 (8)	0 (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	11 (8)	0 (3)
Number of Convictions	0 (8)	10 (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (8)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (3)

In July, the police launched a website that provides information on human trafficking and smuggling, updates on activities of the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Unit, and the opportunity to report suspected cases. (3,27) Suriname also signed bilateral and regional enforcement arrangements with French Guiana, Brazil, and Guyana that included language on joint efforts to combat cross-border criminal activities, including human trafficking. (27,30) Additionally, Suriname participated in a 5-day INTERPOL operation for trafficking in persons in the Lawa area, along the border with French Guiana, and at checkpoints leading to the interior. However, in July, Suriname removed the visa requirements for entry from all countries, which makes immigration officials' pre-arrival screening, including for indicators of human trafficking, difficult. (13,27) During the reporting period, members of the TIP Unit and other police officials received a refresher training course with support from the Prosecutors' Office. However, initial training on issues related to the worst forms of child labor was not provided to new criminal investigators. (3)

In 2022, three police officials accused of direct involvement in the trafficking of two female children in 2021 were prosecuted under laws other than the anti-trafficking in persons law. Two were found guilty and received prison sentences of 12 months, while one was acquitted. (3,27) There were no new investigations concerning the worst forms of child labor. (3) The number of investigators is insufficient to respond to human trafficking cases, and the Prosecutor's Office reported that investigations are initiated primarily as a result of complaints filed and are limited by a lack of resources. (31)

The TIP Unit reported that the police made funding available from their budget to support the establishment of emergency shelter accommodations but noted the funding was not sufficient. (3) Both the TIP Unit of the Police as well as the TIP Desk at the Prosecutors' Office reported a need for more resources to do their jobs efficiently and effectively, especially in the interior of the country. (27) The TIP Unit has 11 members who cover all human trafficking and human smuggling cases for the entire country, which is insufficient staffing to adequately conduct its functions. (3,27) Initial investigations on trafficking are usually conducted by regular police who receive human trafficking training as part of the basic curricula. Research found that the government did not effectively identify trafficking in persons victims among children, migrants in the interior, and in brothels operating within private homes. (9)

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IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission on Combating Child Labor (NCCUK)	Serves as the lead body drafting child labor policies. (10) Coordinates and monitors efforts to address child labor, including the execution of the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor. Also coordinates with the Integrated Child Protection Network to maximize awareness-raising efforts. (11) Mandate is valid through December 2023. (3,8) MOL approved the appointment of a special child labor rapporteur per the recommendation of NCCUK in 2021. (3) During the reporting period, NCCUK translated television and radio awareness programs into six languages and released these through different stations across the country. Funding for this project came from UNICEF. (3) Translated flyers into 3 languages and printed 1,000 flyers to be distributed to community organizations, schools, NGOs, and businesses. Worked with different stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, on the evaluation and reorganization of and amendments to the integrated referral system. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor (2019–2024)	Aims to address child labor by removing children from child labor, and by addressing issues that lead children to become involved in child labor, including poverty and lack of educational opportunities. Also addresses the social and educational reintegration of these children. (11) Annual plan identifies 21 activities that the National Commission on Combating Child Labor intends to work on through the end of 2022. (8) Multiple activities included under this plan are currently in progress. (3)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (3)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of existing social programs to fully address the scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Decent Work Country Program	ILO program that supports capacity building of the Labor Inspectorate and constituents, as well as of the National Commission on Combating Child Labor for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Action Plan. (32) In September, the government ILO agreed to the implementation of a third phase of the Decent Work Country Program, which will aim to focus more on creating job opportunities, especially in developing sectors of the economy such as the oil and gas. (3)
My Line (<i>Mi Lijn</i>)†	Government-run, 24-hour hotline that provides confidential advice to children in need, including victims of the worst forms of child labor, victims of domestic violence, and persons in need of mental support. The initiative continued to operate during the reporting period. (3,8)
Consolidating Access to Quality and Inclusive Education in Suriname*	Government program, supported by the Inter-American Development Bank that began an initiative with the goal of providing inclusive access to all levels of education in Suriname, with a specific focus on children in the interior and improving the quality of lower secondary education. Began in November 2022. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Suriname.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (7)

In 2022, the government launched a social program to expand access to education in underserved areas and continued to support initiatives to eradicate child labor, but existing social programs are inadequate to fully address the problem in all sectors, including in agriculture and mining. (3)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Suriname (Table I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Increase the compulsory education age from 12 to at least age 16, the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the military recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including the use of a child under age 16 for prostitution.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of a child for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on Labor Inspectorate funding.	2012 – 2022
	Publish data on worksite inspections.	2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate and the Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Suriname Police Force are sufficiently funded and adequately staffed to cover labor inspections in both the formal and informal sectors of the labor force, including in risk-prone sectors, such as in fisheries, mining, and agricultural areas in which child labor is likely to occur, particularly in the interior of the country.	2014 – 2022
	Provide mandatory training on the worst forms of child labor to new criminal investigators.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that there are sufficient resources, including for travel to the interior of the country, and inspectors to proactively investigate human trafficking cases.	2022
	Ensure that the child labor referral system can adequately provide long-term solutions, including housing, to child labor cases that are reported to it.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Develop social programs to prevent and eradicate child labor in agriculture and mining.	2015 – 2022
	Strengthen social services to assist child victims of human trafficking, including commercial sexual exploitation.	2014 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education, particularly for children in the interior, by eliminating school-related fees, reducing transportation costs, increasing access to schools in remote locations, improving teacher availability, removing requirements for documentation, and covering material missed during school closures.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that all children, including children of foreign-born parents, have access to free public education regardless of citizenship and residency status, and that school registration is not used to report families without proper residential status.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, the United Republic of Tanzania made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Mainland government made available, for the first time in several years, complete information on its labor law enforcement efforts, identifying 74 child labor violations through 4,800 worksite inspections. The government also created a new task force to enhance efforts to prevent and respond to human trafficking crimes, including those involving children, and allocated financial resources to support its National Strategy on the Elimination of Child Labor. However, children in Tanzania are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in mining, quarrying, and domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Other gaps remain in the legal framework and enforcement of laws related to child labor, including lack of penalties for use of children in illicit activities, lack of minimum age protections for children engaged in domestic work, and an insufficient number of labor inspectors to monitor Tanzania's labor force.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

During the reporting period the government published and validated updated information on the prevalence of child labor. Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mainland Tanzania.

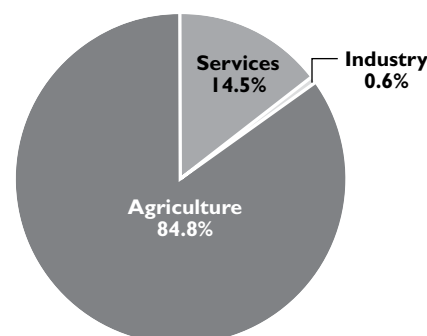
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	20.4 (3,345,516)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	83.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	18.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		68.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2020–2021. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Plowing, weeding,† harvesting,† and processing of crops, including coffee, sugarcane, sisal, tea, tobacco, and cloves, and protecting crops from birds (3-7)
	Seaweed farming (4,8)
	Livestock herding, including tending cattle (3,9)
	Fishing†, including for Nile perch, and fish cleaning and descaling (8,10,11)
Industry	Quarrying† stone and crushing and breaking rocks to produce gravel (3,12)
	Mining,† including gold and tanzanite, and using mercury (3,13,14)
Services	Domestic work, including childcare, cooking, and washing† (5,7)
	Street work, including vending,† selling charcoal, shining shoes, and scavenging† and collecting† garbage (5,13,15,16)
	Work in bars† (5,17)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,16,18,19)
	Forced begging (5,19,20)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (21)
	Forced labor in domestic work, mining, fishing, hunting, commercial trading, quarrying, shining shoes, pushing carts, working in factories and bars, and agriculture, including cattle herding (5,19,22)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




Children in Tanzania engage in a number of hazardous work activities, including mining, quarrying, and working on tobacco plantations. (3,23) Children from underserved communities—including children from rural areas or in situations of poverty, orphans, and children with disabilities—are subjected to forced labor in domestic work, gold and gemstone mining, agriculture, and begging, as well as commercial sexual exploitation in urban areas such as Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Mbeya, and Mwanza. (19) Parents, particularly from poor and rural households, entrust their children to the care of wealthy relatives and community leaders who sometimes force or coerce the children to perform domestic work. (19,22) Exploitation of girls in commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor in domestic work frequently occurs in tourist hubs along the Kenyan border and in Zanzibar. (10,24,25) Although child trafficking primarily occurs internally within Tanzania, traffickers also exploit migrant children, particularly from Burundi, in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. (10,15,19,26)

Schools, particularly in rural areas, lack adequate teachers, classrooms and desks, food, and sanitation facilities, and families are often required to financially contribute to offset these deficits and pay for the costs of uniforms and learning materials. (5,9,10,27) In addition, schools often lack resources for children with disabilities or learning disorders, resulting in many of these students leaving school and becoming vulnerable to child labor. (9,10) In 2021, the government reversed its longstanding practice of expelling girls who became pregnant from school. The government continued to support implementation of this policy change during the reporting period, including identifying and readmitting 3,333 children who had left school for various reasons, including teenage mothers. (5,28) However, girls can still be removed from school during the duration of their pregnancy, which reduces the likelihood that they will return to education. (29)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Tanzania has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar’s non-union matters are governed by distinct territorial jurisdictional laws, leaving each territory to determine its own child labor laws. (17,30) The Mainland government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Tanzania’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections for children in domestic work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Related Entity	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Mainland	No	14	Articles 5 and 102 of the Employment and Labor Relations Act; Article 77 of the Law of the Child Act (31,32)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Mainland	Yes	18	Articles 5 and 102 of the Employment and Labor Relations Act; Article 82 of the Law of the Child Act (31,32)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Mainland	Yes		Article 5 and First Schedule of Regulations of the Employment and Labor Relations Act; Article 82 of the Law of the Child Act (31-33)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Mainland	Yes		Article 6 of the Employment and Labor Relations Act; Article 80 of the Law of the Child Act; Article 25 of the Constitution; Article 4 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (30-34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Mainland	Yes		Article 4 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (34)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Mainland	Yes		Article 138.2.f of the Sexual Offenses Special Provisions Act; Article 4 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (34,35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Mainland	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment		Yes	18	Article 29 of the National Defense Act (36)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		No		
Compulsory Education Age	Mainland	No	13	Article 35 of the National Education Act (37)
Free Public Education	Mainland	No		

* Country has no conscription (36)

Zanzibar's legal framework is in line with international standards related to hazardous work, prohibitions against forced labor, human trafficking of children, commercial sexual exploitation of children, use of children in illicit activities, and free basic education. (38-41) Although the Mainland government has a list of hazardous work activities for children, it does not specify weeding and processing activities that are dangerous tasks in the production of tobacco, cloves, coffee, sisal, and tea. (3-7,31-34) The Mainland government also does not stipulate penalties for using children for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, minimum age for work laws in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar do not meet international standards because they do not extend to all working children, including children engaged in domestic work. (31,38,39) Furthermore, as the compulsory education age in both the Mainland and Zanzibar is below the minimum age for work, are vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. (37,41) The Mainland also lacks a legal standard mandating free basic education for children, though it supports free basic education through a policy, and the national Education Act authorizes local education authorities to assess school fees at the discretion, which may contravene future legal standards to provide free basic education (42)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Related Entity	Role & Activities
Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office for Policy, Labor, Employment, Youth, and the Disabled (PLEYD)	Mainland	Assigns area labor officers in each region to respond to reports of child labor violations, issues non-compliance orders, and reports incidents to police and the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children. Through its Labor Administration and Inspection Section, provides legal guidance upon request, disseminates information to employers and employees on their rights and obligations, and helps area offices conduct labor inspections. (5) Coordinates with the Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children, which employs officers to monitor child labor at the district and village levels and reports back to the PLEYD. (5,28) During the reporting period, the government conducted an estimated 4,800 labor inspections, targeting the agricultural, fishing, and industrial sectors. (5)
Zanzibar Labor Commission	Zanzibar	Ensures compliance with child protection and child labor laws, including inspections, through its Child Protection Unit. Employs 25 labor inspectors who investigate child labor cases reported by the police and refers cases to social welfare officers. (5,43) The Zanzibar labor inspectorate lacks sufficient personnel, office facilities, transportation and fuel, and other resources to adequately enforce child labor laws. (5) In 2022, the government substantially increased funding for its labor inspectorate from \$10,353 in 2021 to \$521,739 and provided training for its labor inspectors. There were no child labor violations identified in these inspections. (5)
Ministry of Home Affairs and Tanzanian Police Force	Mainland	Chairs the Anti-Trafficking Secretariat, which coordinates the government's anti-trafficking efforts. (20) The Tanzanian Police Force, through its Gender and Children's desks, investigates cases of child labor and other forms of child endangerment reported to police stations; in some cases, refers cases to labor officers or seeks assistance from social welfare officers and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to take legal action. (17,44,45) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Home Affairs, with the UNODC, launched an updated National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Plan of Action for 2021–2024. (46,47) The new action plan includes integration of human trafficking awareness within school curriculum and integrates human trafficking issues into the Gender and Children's desks of the Tanzanian Police Force. (46) The government also launched the Anti-Human Trafficking and Child Protection Task Force for Mainland Tanzania, housed within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which includes 27 stakeholders from the Anti-Trafficking Secretariat, and various law enforcement, social welfare, and justice sectors to strengthen Tanzania's ability to respond to the international dimensions of human trafficking and other crimes against children. (48) The Zanzibar government also established a Serious Organized Crime Unit, which will conduct specialized investigations related to organized crime, including human trafficking and crimes against children. (49)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Tanzania* took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the labor ministries that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	Related Entity	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Mainland	Unknown (10)	\$521,739 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Mainland	Unknown (21)	87 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Mainland	Yes (10,31,50)	Yes (31,50)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Mainland	Unknown (21)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Mainland	Unknown (21)	4,800 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Mainland	Unknown (21)	74 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Mainland	Unknown (21)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Mainland	Unknown (21)	0 (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Mainland	Unknown (21)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Mainland	Unknown	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Mainland	Yes (50)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Mainland	Unknown	Yes (5)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	Related Entity	2021	2022
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Mainland	Yes (51)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Mainland	Yes (10)	Yes (5)

* Federal reporting data for 2022. Zanzibar reported separate data. (5)

The Mainland government has a complaint mechanism for individuals to report potential cases of child labor, but research indicates that this mechanism is not consistently used because of insufficient tools and resources, as well as budgetary constraints. (51) Research indicates that Tanzania does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties and insufficient budgetary resources hinder their ability to identify and respond to labor violations. (5,28,52,53)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Tanzania took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of published information on criminal law enforcement efforts.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	Related Entity	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Mainland	Unknown (21)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	Mainland	Unknown (21)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Mainland	Unknown (21)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	Mainland	Unknown (21)	Unknown (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Mainland	Unknown (21)	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Mainland	Yes (10)	Yes (5)

The government did not maintain a centralized law enforcement data collection system for human trafficking crimes, hindering its ability to disaggregate national human trafficking statistics and likely resulting in underreported anti-trafficking statistics. Therefore, it was not possible to disaggregate nationwide statistics by type of exploitation, industry, and offenses related to categorical worst forms of child labor. (48)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including inefficacy to accomplish mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Related Entity	Role & Activities
National Education Task Force on Child Labor	Mainland and Zanzibar	Reviews existing laws, regulations, and strategies related to children's issues, including the National Strategy on the Elimination of Child Labor. Evaluates curriculum and programs, identifies gaps, and suggests strategies to resolve barriers to accessing education. (54) Although the government reported that the Task Force was active in 2022, it did not provide information on activities undertaken. (5)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including existence of an education policy that may adversely impact child labor.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Related Entity	Description & Activities
National Strategy on Elimination of Child Labor (2018–2022)	Mainland and Zanzibar	Coordinated prevention and responses to the worst forms of child labor at the national level. (55) In 2022, the government allocated \$43,476 to the National Strategy on Elimination of Child Labor for review and development of an updated policy to be launched in 2023. (5) In addition, it conducted engagement workshops with child labor stakeholders, formed anti-human trafficking working groups in the Kagera, Geita, Kigoma, Tabora, and Katavi regions—areas with high prevalence of human trafficking and child labor—and engaged in special targeted labor inspection activities in the Tabora and Kigoma regions. (5)

Tanzania does not have a law requiring free public education, but it does have an education policy that allows children to attend primary school and lower secondary school without paying tuition fees. (56) The Mainland government, however, regulates access to secondary education through the Primary School Leaving Examination, which determines those students selected for admission into secondary schools. (42,57) Students who fail the exam generally cannot retake it and must leave public education at the age of 14, thereby increasing their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (58,59)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Related Entity	Description & Activities
Tanzania Social Action Fund Conditional Cash Transfer Program†		Government-funded conditional cash transfer program to provide financial assistance to vulnerable populations, including children. (20) Also manages Zanzibar's Productive Social Safety Nets fund, which provides conditional cash transfers to 33,523 households experiencing extreme poverty and other vulnerabilities to child labor. (60) During the reporting period, the government had 1.4 million households registered under the conditional cash transfer program, and undertook initiatives to register households with children living with disabilities for receipt of a monthly supplementary disability grant, in addition to the regular monthly stipend. (61) An evaluation of Tanzania's Conditional Cash Transfer Program found that it had achieved little reduction of child labor, because the work of children only shifted from outside to inside the household. Furthermore, the program had not achieved reductions in excessive working hours and engagement in hazardous activities among children. (62)
Rural Enterprise Support to Eliminate Child Labor		Project implemented by the Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing Foundation as a follow-up to the Promoting Sustainable Practices to Eradicate Child Labor in Tobacco program that ended in 2020. Aims to support farmers and reduce child labor in Chunya, Kaliua, Sikonge, and Urambo districts. (10,21) In 2022, the program facilitated 17 community and district child labor committees on data collection and reporting and supported the development of 17 community child labor action plans. In addition, the project allocated \$34,783 to 11 groups for economic empowerment and supported the enrollment of 3,008 children to schools, protecting them from child labor. (5)
Eradicating the Worst Forms of Labor in the Eight Mining Wards of the Geita District		French Development Agency-funded program, implemented by Plan International, aiming to eliminate child labor and other forms of violence against children, especially girls, in the small-scale mining and fishing sectors. The project covers 15 wards and 63 villages in 3 Geita districts: Geita, Nyang'hwale, and Chato. (21) In 2022, the program supported the establishment of 81 child protection committees in 15 wards and 63 villages. The committees aim to raise awareness on child protection, child labor prevention, and response. (21) During the reporting period, the program supported a new reporting and referral mechanism to report cases of child abuse and exploitation, leading to interventions in 445 cases. In addition, the program provided children withdrawn from child labor with school materials. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Tanzania.

The scope of government-funded social programs is inadequate in that it does not cover other forms of agriculture beyond tobacco, nor does it address domestic work, fishing, or informal sectors in which children engage in child labor.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Tanzania (Table II).

Table II. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Related Entity	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Mainland	Expand the list of hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children to ensure that the list includes weeding and processing in the production of tobacco, cloves, coffee, sisal, and tea.	2016 – 2022
	Mainland	Criminalize the use of children in illicit activities, particularly in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2012 – 2022
	Mainland and Zanzibar	Criminalize the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Mainland and Zanzibar	Ensure that minimum age protections apply to all children, including those engaged in domestic work.	2013 – 2022
	Mainland and Zanzibar	Raise the compulsory education age from 13 to 14 to align with the minimum age for work.	2017 – 2022
	Mainland	Establish by law free basic public education and remove legal authority of local education authorities to assess discretionary education fees.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Mainland and Zanzibar	Ensure that the child labor complaint mechanism has sufficient resources to carry out operations.	2021 – 2022
	Mainland	Increase financial resources and the number of labor inspectors from 87 to 643 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 25.7 million people and to strengthen identification and responses to labor violations.	2013 – 2022
	Zanzibar	Increase material resources provided to the labor inspectorate, including office facilities, transportation, and fuel.	2013 – 2022
	Mainland and Zanzibar	Develop a mechanism for the centralized collection and publication of data related to the worst forms of child labor; including number of investigations, and imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Mainland and Zanzibar	Ensure that the National Education Task Force on Child Labor is able to carry out its intended mandates.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Mainland	Eliminate provisions in the Primary School Leaving Examination that are barriers to education, including by allowing children who initially fail the exam to retake it for consideration in secondary school admission.	2016 – 2022
Social Programs	Mainland	Broaden mechanisms to facilitate the re-enrollment of girls who leave school during pregnancy.	2021 – 2022
	Mainland and Zanzibar	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible to all children in Tanzania, including those living in rural areas, by ensuring adequate resources for children with disabilities and learning disorders; increasing resources for teachers, classrooms and desks, food, and sanitation facilities; and defraying informal costs imposed on families, including school uniforms, books, and other learning materials.	2010 – 2022
	Mainland and Zanzibar	Harmonize child labor prevention and elimination measures into the Social Action Fund Conditional Cash Transfer Program to increase its effectiveness in preventing and eliminating child labor.	2022
	Mainland and Zanzibar	Develop programs that include the agricultural, domestic work, fishing, and informal sectors to address children engaged in child labor.	2017 – 2022

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In 2022, Thailand made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government amended the Anti-Money Laundering Act to allow for assets seized from human trafficking offenders to be used as financial remedies for survivors of trafficking, including children who were sexually exploited. In addition, it established the Child Sexual Exploitation Crime Center to help facilitate investigations of offenses related to child pornography materials. The government also established the Migrant Education Coordination Center to coordinate with Migrant Learning Centers on education, protection, and health of migrant children. Moreover, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports initiated the Child Friendly Tourism project by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with 21 government agencies, private sector organizations, and non-governmental organizations to develop measures to reduce commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism sector. Finally, the government drafted and approved the fifth National Policy and Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2023–2027) in coordination with relevant public and private organizations across government and civil society. However, children in Thailand are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, it does not meet the international standard for the minimum age for work because the law does not grant protections to children working outside of formal employment relationships. Moreover, there is a lack of available research and data on the prevalence of child labor in high-risk sectors, such as agriculture, garment manufacturing, domestic work, and construction.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Thailand.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	13.0 (1,302,267)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	96.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	14.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3 (MICS 3), 2005–2006. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Processing shrimp and seafood† (3-6)
	Fishing, including work performed in fisheries and on sea vessels† (3,7-9)
	Planting and harvesting sugarcane (4)
	Producing rubber (6,10)
Industry	Manufacturing, including garment production (3,9)
	Working in poultry factories and working on pig farms (11,12)
	Construction, including transporting cement and bricks (3,4,6,11,13,14)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work (10,15,16)
	Work in restaurants, motor vehicle repair shops, and gas stations (4,6,17,18)
	Street work, including begging and vending (3,6,8,9,11,15,16)
	<i>Muay Thai</i> fighting (3,9,11,19-30)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,6,8,9,15,17,31-33)
	Forced labor in vending, begging, and domestic work (3,9,11,15,32)
	Forced labor in the production of garments, agriculture, and in shrimp and seafood processing (3,6)
	Forced labor in fishing, including fisheries (3,7,9,34,35)
	Use in the production and trafficking of drugs, including narcotics, amphetamines, kratom, and marijuana (3,6,9,10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

A widespread migrant labor shortage, coupled with increased migration between Burma and Thailand due to the 2021 Burma military coup, resulted in increased numbers of underage migrant children engaging in child labor. There have also been increased instances of recruitment agencies falsifying ages on official documents. (16,36,37) Children working in agriculture face health risks from lifting heavy loads, risk injury from operating dangerous machinery and using sharp equipment, and are exposed to pesticides, sun and heat, and work long hours from very early in the morning until nighttime. (9,11) In addition, Thai and migrant children who accompany their parents working in the construction sector are exposed to child labor at and around construction sites, including performing construction work or working as caretakers for younger children or as housekeepers, and are not always enrolled in school. (3,9,13,14,38)

Children also participate in *Muay Thai* competitions, an area of work in which there is evidence of serious head injuries. Children receive remuneration in the form of prize money or wages, and research found that betting and illegal gambling on the outcome of children’s matches occurs often during *Muay Thai* competitions. (3,19,21,27-29,16) In addition, an increased number of children are reported to be exploited in forced labor and forced criminality in online scamming operations in Chinese-owned Special Economic Zones in neighboring countries. (16) Thai children and children from Burma, Laos, and Cambodia, are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Thai massage parlors, bars, karaoke lounges, hotels, and private residences. Children are also increasingly being coerced into producing pornography and performing sexual acts through online social media platforms and private chat rooms. (3,8,9,15-17,32) Perpetrators engaging in commercial sexual exploitation of children attempt to avoid law enforcement by arranging appointments in private residences, randomly changing venues, and paying children directly. The Thai government reported that some former child sex trafficking victims have become recruiters and traffickers themselves. (9) Several teachers and child welfare workers were found to be exploiting children in commercial sexual exploitation. (39,40) Moreover, some children in the south of Thailand were recruited into non-state armed groups. (16,41)




Thai law provides for 12 years of free education for all children in Thailand. (6,16,42) However, language barriers prevent some children, particularly migrants and ethnic minorities, from accessing basic education as public school instruction and school applications are only available in Thai. (3,16,43,44) Although children without identity documents or a registered address cannot legally be denied enrollment in public schools, research found that there is a lack of clarity among school officials regarding the type of documentation that non-Thai students need to possess to enroll in school, which may be a barrier to education access. (16,45) Some migrant and refugee communities formed unofficial educational learning centers, including Migrant Learning Centers (MLCs), to provide children with native-language education, and in some cases provide an educational alternative to migrant children who either had difficulty enrolling in school or could not access Thai schools due to lack of proximity. However, there were reports of immigration police visiting MLCs to verify the legal status of migrant teachers and workers. (16,46) This practice intimidated some migrant children and their families and resulted in reduced attendance of children at MLCs, as some parents may not have legal permits to work in Thailand. (16)

Children identifying as LGBTQI+ and those experiencing poverty, drug addiction, family problems, and teen pregnancy, may have additional barriers to education access due to increased harassment and bullying, which may increase their risk of dropping out of school and engaging in child labor. (11,47,48)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Thailand has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Thailand's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including not meeting the international standard for the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Sections 5, 44, and 148/1 of the Labor Protection Act (49)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 22, 47, 49, 50, 144, and 148/2 of the Labor Protection Act; Sections 26 and 78 of the Child Protection Act; Sections 20 and 45 of the Home Workers Protection Act (49-51)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Chapter 4, Sections 49 and 50 of the Labor Protection Act; Clause 4 of the Ministerial Regulation concerning Labor Protection in Sea Fishery Work; Clause 2 of the Ministerial Regulation Identifying Tasks that may be Hazardous to the Health and Safety of Pregnant Women or Children Under the Age of Fifteen Years (52-54)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 312 and 312 bis of the Penal Code; Section 4 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 6 and 8 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (No. 3); Sections 4, 5, 7, and 8 of the Royal Decree Amendments of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (55-58)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 282, 283, and 285 of the Penal Code; Sections 4 and 6 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (No. 3) (55,56)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 8 and 9 of the Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act; Section 4 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 6 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (No. 3); Sections 4 and 8 of the Royal Decree Amendments of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 282, 283, 285, and 286 of the Penal Code; Section 26 of the Child Protection Act; Amendment to the Penal Code Act No. 25 (50,55-59)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 4 and 26(5) of the Child Protection Act; Section 93 and 93/2 of the Narcotics Act; Section 84 of the Penal Code; Section 22 of the Beggar Control Act (50,60-62)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 25 of the Military Service Act (63)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Section 16 of the Military Service Act (63)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 17 of the National Education Act (42)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 10 of the National Education Act; Section 54 of the Thai Constitution (42,64)

During the reporting period, the Anti-Money Laundering Act was amended to allow for assets seized from human trafficking offenders to be used as financial remedies for trafficking victims, including children who were sexually exploited. (65,66) Moreover, a ministerial regulation was issued to allow for prosecution of child pornography crimes under The Special Case Investigation Act, enabling child pornography cases to be investigated more quickly. (16,67,68)

However, the minimum age for work in Thailand does not comply with international standards because the law does not grant protections to children working outside of employment relationships. In addition, because the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, and the law does not require 15-year-olds to complete compulsory schooling before seeking work, some children may leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (42,52,69) Moreover, although Thailand has identified fishing on sea vessels as a form of hazardous labor—and research indicates that there is inadequate oversight of fishing vessels—the government implemented an amendment in 2022 to the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Fishery Work 2014 to allow owners of fishing boats to employ a relative as young as age 16 as an intern. (9,16,70,71)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor Protection and Welfare (DLPW) of the Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws through workplace inspections. (10) Operates Hotline 1506 and staffs DLPW offices in each province in Thailand to answer questions about working conditions and receive child labor complaints from the public. (3,43,71) During the reporting period, DLPW's Call Center received 201 complaints related to violations of child labor laws, and labor inspectors filed 28 cases against 48 offenders for child labor law violations. Moreover, DLPW developed standard operating procedures for labor inspectors across government agencies on identifying indicators of forced labor and trafficking in persons and using referral mechanisms. (16) In addition, DLPW carried out labor inspections for labor violations, including child labor, of 12,810 fishing vessels with the Department of Fisheries, Marine Department, and Department of Employment at Port-In-Port-Out centers. (16) During the reporting period, the DLPW also implemented trainings with NGOs for migrant workers in garment and textile manufacturing, construction, and agriculture on labor rights and child labor laws. (16) Moreover, the government conducted 17 trainings and projects in 2022 to build and strengthen capacity of labor inspectors, government officials, and NGOs on labor inspection, protection, and prevention. (16,72)

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Royal Thai Police (RTP)	Operates the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division (ATPD), the Thailand Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (TICAC), and the Child Women Protection, Anti-Human Trafficking, and Fishery Industry Center (CWP). (16,36,73) ATPD enforces laws related to forced labor, human trafficking, child pornography, and commercial sexual exploitation of children, and operates Hotline 1191 to receive complaints on human trafficking and violence against children. (71) TICAC, which includes representatives from the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), social workers, and NGOs, investigates and enforces laws against child trafficking and online commercial sexual exploitation of children, including the distribution and production of child pornography. (3,6,8,9,32,38,74) CWP is responsible for protecting children, young people, women, and laborers from human rights violations at both the national and international levels. (36,73) During the reporting period, the RTP established two child-friendly interviewing rooms, including for interviewing children involved in forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation, and conducted three study trips to the U.S. focused on cybercrime laws related to child-exploitation, child advocacy centers as support mechanisms for investigations, and cyber forensics for collection of electronic evidence. (36,37) TICAC investigated 578 potential offenses and initiated a total of 482 cases, which included 41 child trafficking cases, 164 child sexual exploitation cases, and 265 child pornography possession cases. (16) TICAC also conducted a training workshop on digital forensic investigations and evidence collection for 220 TICAC and police officers. (36) Moreover, TICAC and the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit launched a new website that serves as an official complaint channel for victims of sexual exploitation. (16) In addition, CWP produced four animated videos on preventing child exploitation, designed with inputs from human trafficking survivors, and shared them on social media and in schools. (36) RTP also received reports of 91 cases in which children were used, provided, or offered for prostitution and identified pornographic performances and materials involving 87 child victims. (16) Moreover, in 2022, 1,942 police investigators and administrators were trained on policies, laws, and techniques to conduct criminal investigations and prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking crimes. (15,16,36)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Thailand took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of inspections in informal sectors and in sectors primarily employing migrant populations.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,006,683 (9)	\$976,150 (72)
Number of Labor Inspectors	1,889 (6)	1,720 (72)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (52)	Yes (52)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (72)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	22,890 (6)	17,822 (72)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	31 (6)	28 (72)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	13 (6)	7 (72)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (6)	7 (72)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (72)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (72)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (52)	Yes (52)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (72)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (72)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (72)

In addition to the Department of Labor Protection and Welfare's (DLPW) 1,720 labor inspectors, the government employs 973 inspectors through the Royal Thai Police (RTP), Department of Fisheries, Ministry of the Interior and other agencies. (72) However, research finds that inspections conducted on fishing vessels, a sector with well-documented instances of labor abuses in Thailand, are inadequate to identify child and adult victims, with reports that some interpreters accompanying inspectors were instructed to not translate grievances of migrant workers relayed during inspections on fishing vessels, potentially compromising the effectiveness of inspections, including of child labor. (9,16,70,71) In addition, there are anecdotal reports of child

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labor inspections in informal sectors being insufficient due to labor inspectors' inability to access remote work places and safety concerns for inspectors. (9,11) Research also finds that some labor inspectors intentionally overlook instances of child labor among migrant children due to fear of reprisal from business owners and local politicians and authorities. (16)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Thailand took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including lack of training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (72)
Number of Investigations	39 (6)	99 (75)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	30 (6)	77 (75)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	96 (75)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (6)	Yes (75)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (72)

During the reporting period, the Office of the Attorney General created a new curriculum and training for prosecutors and multidisciplinary teams on protecting children's rights in child sexual exploitation and abuse cases, prosecuting cases related to production and distribution of online child sexual exploitation materials, and on forensic interviewing, including for cases related to child trafficking. The Department of Special Investigation (DSI) also established the Child Sexual Exploitation Crime Center to help facilitate the effectiveness of investigations of special cases of offenses related to child pornography materials and established the Complicit Officials in Human Trafficking Monitoring and Investigation Center. (16,36) Moreover, the government displayed a video in Thai airports and on Thai airline flights discouraging commercial sexual exploitation of children during travel and coordinated with foreign governments to deny entry to known sex offenders. (15) In 2022, the government identified 29 boys and 125 girls as survivors of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor. (36) The Thai Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection also reported 4,885 cases of children involved in the production and trade of narcotics. Child victims involved in criminal activities were taken to Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection facilities, where they received rehabilitation services and other social services during the judicial process. (9,16)

Though the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) began implementation of the National Referral Mechanism in 2022, implementation among officials and multidisciplinary teams was uneven in practice, particularly at the local levels. (16,36) Moreover, there were reports that human trafficking may be underreported due to inconsistencies in the identification process and enforcement training gaps, including understanding the gravity of human trafficking crimes and victim identification training amongst police, prosecutors, and judges. (8,15,76,77) This includes a lack of understanding of the use of male children in commercial sexual exploitation among some provincial government and court officials due to the notion that boys should be able to defend themselves against perpetrators. (12,32)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinates the implementation of child labor policies, facilitates cooperation among relevant ministries, and reports annually to the Thai Cabinet on child labor issues. Chaired by MOL, with representation from other government agencies, employer and worker associations, and civil society groups. (6,9) Responsible for monitoring the National Policy and Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (6) Held one committee meeting and two subcommittee meetings during the reporting period to review a framework and guidelines to prevent and address child labor in the shrimp, fish, sugarcane, and garment industries. (16,72)

The Thailand Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force, comprising police officers, social workers, and NGO representatives, also coordinates investigations and enforces laws against human trafficking, forced labor, and commercial sexual exploitation of children. (3,43) In addition, the Committee on National and Provincial Committees on Child Protection held four meetings, developed plans to survey vulnerable children, and approved a national action plan on Alternative Care for Children (2022–2026) during the reporting period. Further, in coordination with NGOs, the government established the Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking and Children's Rights in Mae Sot to support monitoring of child labor and child trafficking. (16)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of certain policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Policy and Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor Phase III (2021–2022)	Sought to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Thailand in accordance with international labor standards. Focused on (1) preventing the worst forms of child labor, (2) rescuing, protecting, and rehabilitating children from the worst forms of child labor, (3) integrating systems and mechanisms for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor, and (4) communicating with the public. (6) During the reporting period, the fourth action plan was developed in coordination with relevant public and private organizations from government and civil society and was approved for 2023–2027. (16) Moreover, visits to 17 businesses in the sugarcane, garment, shrimp and seafood processing sectors were conducted to collect information on labor and manufacturing processes as part of the “Prevention and Correction of Child and Forced Labor” Memorandum of Understanding. (72)
Cyber Tipline Remote Access Policy	Seeks to eliminate online sexual exploitation of children in Thailand by partnering with the U.S. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Supports TICAC by permitting the RTP to request warrants to search residences and electronic equipment for child pornography and initiate criminal prosecutions. (6) In 2022, TICAC investigated 9,669 tips from the Cyber Tipline. A total of 433 offenders were arrested and 431 survivors were removed from exploitation. (16)
National Strategic Plan (2018–2037)	Seeks to improve education access, particularly for vulnerable and poor children in remote areas, by increasing transportation to school, reforming the school subsidy program for poor families, and providing scholarships for children who stay in school. (3,6,16,80) Research could not determine what activities were undertaken during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (72)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Centers to Promote Child Advocacy and for Victims of Trafficking and Migrants†	Migrant Learning Centers (MLCs) are NGO- and government-operated centers that provide basic education, life skills training, and vocational training to children in migrant communities along Thailand's borders. (3,6,9,43) While access to education for migrant children has increased, some MLCs lack accreditation. (3,38) Moreover, MLCs are not accessible to all migrant children located in Thailand due to limited geographic coverage of MLCs. The government reported 65 registered MLCs supporting 10,808 students were in operation in 2022. (16,72) In addition, the Migrant Educational Coordination Center was created to improve access to education for migrant children, support increased coordination of MLCs, and develop the capacity of teachers in MLCs. (16,81) Moreover, Child Advocacy Centers are RTP-operated child-friendly spaces to conduct social, legal (including forensic interviews), and repatriation services to children who are survivors or vulnerable to human trafficking, including children trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. (6,16,34,82,83) In 2022, the four Child Advocacy Centers assisted 76 child victims during the investigation process of 43 cases and provided counselling services to children 1,495 times. Finally, Operation Centers for Protection of Rights relating to Human Trafficking Cases were opened in two border provinces that are known to be hotspots for human trafficking. (16)
Programs to Address the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*†	The Ministry of Tourism and Sports initiated the Child Friendly Tourism project by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with 21 government agencies, private sector organizations, and NGOs to develop measures to prevent and reduce commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry. (16,36) Moreover, the Thailand Safe Internet Coalition, a partnership led by MSDHS, UNICEF, and Thai telecommunications companies and internet service providers, was formed to strengthen reporting of online abuse, enhance coordination, improve service provision for survivors, and increase awareness of children, young people, and parents to online risks. (16,84)
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) Programs‡	Implements anti-trafficking activities, including those involving forced child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation, through the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division (ATPD). Organizes trainings and enforces child protection and human trafficking laws through collaboration with the RTP, DSI, DLPW, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (3,6,9,15,32,50,82) Oversees Hotline 1300, which receives human trafficking and child labor complaints. Operates 77 temporary shelters, with one located in every province, and 9 long-term shelters for human trafficking survivors, including a shelter dedicated solely to boys. (9,16,32) Monitors 76 Provincial Operation Centers for the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking. Provides assistance and welfare protection to survivors of human trafficking. (6) Acts as the Secretariat for both the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee and the Coordinating and Monitoring of Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee. (9,32) During the reporting period, MSDHS began implementation of a new National Referral Mechanism (NRM) that provided officials with a framework for identifying and referring potential survivors of human trafficking to appropriate support mechanisms. Training workshops were held with law enforcement entities, labor inspection officers, multidisciplinary teams and other government agencies to support the NRM's adoption. (16) In addition, MSDHS, RTP, the Court of Justice, and NGOs held a series of meetings with human trafficking survivors to create and publish guidelines on identifying victims of online sexual exploitation. (16) In 2022, 115 child survivors of the worst forms of child labor stayed in MSDHS's temporary shelters. (16,78) However, research found that temporary shelters for trafficking survivors managed by MSDHS employed inconsistent policies and provision of care to victims, including a lack of psychologists and staff trained on trauma-informed care. (15)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Thailand.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,71,72,85)

The lack of available research and data on the prevalence of child labor in high-risk sectors, such as agriculture, garment manufacturing, domestic work, and construction, makes it difficult for the Government of Thailand to design appropriate programs to address these issues. (3,38)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Thailand (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to children working outside of employment relationships.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include sectors in which child labor is known to occur, including paid participation in <i>Muay Thai</i> , in which there is evidence that children are exposed to physical dangers.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that fishing vessels employing children under age 18 to work as apprentices are fully complying with the protections required in the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Fishery Work.	2022
Enforcement	Ensure provincial government and court officials are provided adequate training on human trafficking issues—specifically in addressing cases of male children in commercial sexual exploitation—to afford boys the same protections and victim assistance as girls.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure law enforcement officials report and investigate all suspected human trafficking incidences.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that children are not engaging in child labor due to shortages in labor, especially migrant children in the fishing and manufacturing industries.	2022
	Ensure labor inspectors are provided training and resources necessary to conduct inspections at remote informal sector workplaces, including in agriculture and domestic work.	2019 – 2022
	Provide interpretation services that enable labor inspectors to meaningfully interview foreign workers and ensure independence of the labor inspectorate from outside interests.	2022
	Ensure proper training and full implementation of the National Referral Mechanism for officials and multidisciplinary teams, including at the local levels.	2022
Government Policies	Publish activities undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor, including the National Strategic Plan (2018–2037).	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Improve access to education, especially for ethnic minority and migrant children, including by clarifying to school officials the necessary documents non-Thai students need to submit for enrollment, raising awareness of migrant children's right to education, addressing language barriers for non-Thai speaking students, including on public school applications, and ensuring Migrant Learning Centers are accredited.	2012 – 2022
	Conduct child labor prevalence surveys to ensure that there are sufficient social programs to address exploitation of children in the agriculture, garment manufacturing, domestic work, and construction sectors.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that there are sufficient social programs to assist children from vulnerable groups, such as migrant children and LGBTQI+ children, who are at high risk of child labor.	2016 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Timor-Leste made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government increased funding for the labor inspectorate; established a child protection network; finalized, and trained law enforcement officials and service providers on, comprehensive, government-wide standard operating procedures for victim identification of human trafficking and referral, including for child victims of trafficking; and completed a quantitative labor survey. However, despite these new initiatives to address child labor, Timor-Leste is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Research indicates that some school principals forced pregnant girls to leave school, making them more vulnerable to involvement in child labor, including its worst forms. Children in Timor-Leste are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in street vending and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work. Although Timor-Leste law provides for criminal penalties for the worst forms of child labor, labor inspection agencies are not empowered to inspect or enforce labor standards in the informal agriculture and commercial sectors.



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I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Timor-Leste.

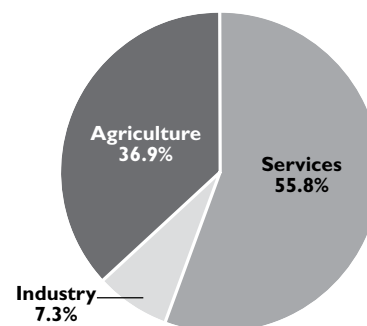
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	12.3 (40,337)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	83.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	12.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		101.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Labour Force-Child Labour Survey (LFS-CLS), 2016. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including cultivating and processing coffee† and growing vegetables and other crops (3-8)
	Fishing,† including work on boats and repairing nets (3,9-12)
Industry	Construction,† including brickmaking (3)
	Operating weaving and knitting machines (5)
	Mining,† including in artisanal sand and stone quarrying (6)
Services	Domestic work† (3,6-8)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and scavenging (3,6,8)
	Shop keeping, selling goods in markets, and restaurant services (5,8,12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,12-14)
	Forced domestic and agricultural work (7-11,13,14)
	Forced labor in street vending (12,14)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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In Timor-Leste, traffickers exploit some children, from rural areas to the capital city, Dili, in domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, or forced labor; traffickers also exploit children from Timor-Leste abroad. (7,11,14,15) Some rural families send children to live with relatives in Dili for school and work; however, there are reports that some of those children are forced to work, including as street vendors, to earn their keep. (6,12,14) Although data are limited, it is reported that children are sometimes directed to work on family farms against their wishes, to supplement family incomes or to pay off family debts. (7,11,12,14)

Research indicates that some school principals forced pregnant girls to leave school. (16) Some pregnant students who attempted to transfer schools faced difficulty obtaining transfer documentation, which is at the discretion of school principals. This practice may make pregnant girls more vulnerable to involvement in child labor, including its worst forms. (11,12,17,18) In addition, the lack of sanitation facilities at schools can result in girls dropping out of school upon reaching puberty, and children with disabilities are often unable to attend school due to accessibility and infrastructure challenges. Children must also pay additional school fees to attend school, such as for school uniforms and supplies, which can hinder access to education, particularly for children from poor and rural areas. (6,18,19)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Timor-Leste has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Timor-Leste's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for hazardous work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 68 of the Labor Code (20)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	17	Article 67 of the Labor Code (20)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Hazardous and Prohibited Activities to Children Under the Age of 18 (21)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 155, 162, 163, and 166 of the Penal Code; Articles 8 and 67 of the Labor Code (20,22)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 81 of the Immigration and Asylum Act; Articles 162–164 and 166 of the Penal Code; Article 67 of the Labor Code; Article 18 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking (20,22-24)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Fourth Amendment to Articles 163 and 164 of the Penal Code; Articles 155 and 174–176 of the Penal Code; Article 67 of the Labor Code (20,22,25)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 155 of the Penal Code; Article 67 of the Labor Code (20,22)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 17 of the Law on Military Service (26)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 14 of the Law on Military Service (26)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 125 of the Penal Code (22)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 11 of the Education System Framework Law (27)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 59 of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste; Article 11 of the Education System Framework Law (27,28)

Research indicates that various sections of the Penal Code only criminalize the use, procuring, and offering of a child for prostitution, production of pornography, and pornographic performances when the child victim is younger than age 17. Although Timor-Leste has adopted the List of Hazardous and Prohibited Activities to Children Under the Age of 18, it is uncertain how this law will interact with the Labor Code, which sets the minimum age for hazardous work at age 17 and does not meet international standards. (18-21,29-31) The Labor Code also does not specify which activities qualify as light work. (20) Finally, the minimum age for work of 15 is lower than the compulsory education age of 16, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (27,28)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Administration of the Labor Inspectorate General	Falls under the Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs (MCAE) and conducts labor inspections. Provides civil oversight of laws related to child labor, investigates incidents of forced labor, and refers potential criminal violations of labor laws to the Timor-Leste National Police (PNTL). (32)
Timor-Leste National Police (PNTL)	Enforce criminal laws against forced labor, commercial sexual exploitation, child abuse, and human trafficking. Include the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU), the immigration police, and the border police. (10,12)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Timor-Leste took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Administration of the Labor Inspectorate General (IGT) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$478,000 (4)	\$490,869 (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	26 (4)	26 (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (20)	Yes (6)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (4)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	1,612 (4)	1,700 (6)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (4)	1 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (4)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (4)	0 (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (33)	Yes (33)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (6)

The IGT reported that the number of labor inspectors is insufficient to conduct the required labor inspections. (6,18) Research found that there are insufficient child labor enforcement protections for children working on family farms or in domestic work because IGT inspectors are only empowered to inspect and issue penalties to formal workplaces. (12,20) The IGT also had limited capacity to conduct inspections in Timor-Leste's rural areas, where child labor in the agricultural sector is prevalent. This limitation was due to a lack of available transportation, including funds to pay for fuel for government vehicles. (6,18)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Timor-Leste took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including lack of funding for investigations.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (4)	No (6)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	1 (34)	0 (6)
Number of Convictions	2 (34)	0 (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (34)	Yes (34)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (6)

The Vulnerable Persons Unit of the Timor-Leste National Police (PNTL), which is charged with the enforcement of criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, did not receive any funding to carry out investigations. (6) The curriculum for new and existing members of the judiciary includes trainings on human trafficking that criminal prosecutors can use to develop new human trafficking investigations and prosecutions. In addition, the government has finalized and trained law enforcement officials and service providers on comprehensive, government-wide standard operating procedures for victim identification and referral, including for child victims of human trafficking. (14,35) However, the lack of expertise and understanding of human trafficking crimes remain an impediment to the government's efforts to effectively address human trafficking. (7) Due to the limited number of judges and prosecutors in Timor-Leste, cases can remain pending without a court date for long periods of time. (15) The government did not provide information on the number of investigations for inclusion in this report. (6)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission Against Child Labor (CNTI)	Develops child labor policies, raises awareness, and contributes to efforts to ratify and implement international conventions related to child protection. Develops the National Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Timor-Leste. (17,30) Disseminates formal information on the normative and technical framework applicable to child labor. Elaborates, approves, and periodically reviews the hazardous work list of jobs prohibited for children under age 18. (17,30) Chaired by the Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment Police. Other members include PNTL; Timorese Labor Union Confederation; youth empowerment NGO Forum Tau Matan; Ministry of Tourism, Commerce, and Industry; Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI); Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports; Ministry of Justice; and MCAE. (6) During the reporting period, CNTI held four meetings and conducted activities, including a Child Labor Qualitative Survey; a Training of Trainers on prevention and combating child labor for six labor inspectors; socialization on prevention and combating child labor in six municipalities; and an audience with President Jose Ramos Horta and the Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs to discuss the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor and the updated hazardous work list for children, both still pending approval by the Council of Ministers. (16)

During the reporting period, the government established the Child Protection Network, which meets quarterly to facilitate information sharing and coordination on child protection issues between relevant government and non-governmental entities. The Child Protection Network exists at the national, municipal, and district levels. (6)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Timor-Leste	Aims to strengthen implementation of ILO C. 182 by establishing the Child Labor Commission Working Group, developing a hazardous work list, and creating a national action plan against child labor. Launched in 2009 in partnership with ILO and the Government of Brazil. (4,12) Despite being finalized in 2016, the Council of Ministers has yet to approve the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Timor-Leste. (6,30,36)
Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan (2011–2030)	Provides short-term and long-term plans for the nation's development, including the eradication of the worst forms of child labor, poverty alleviation, and implementation of social transfer programs. Specifies commitments to improve the educational system from 2011 to 2030. (37) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan (2011–2030) during the reporting period.

There is no policy on providing education for girls during their pregnancy or to encourage girls to return to school after giving birth. (16,17,38)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
<i>Bolsa da Mãe*</i> †	MSSI poverty reduction program that provides cash benefits to poor households with children, headed by women—including single mothers, widows, and orphans—on the condition that children attend and successfully complete each level of schooling. (39) Funded by the Government of Timor-Leste and the Government of Australia, through the Australia-Timor-Leste Partnership for Human Development. During the reporting period, MSSI expanded the program to include pregnant women and their children up to age 6, and launched <i>Bolsa da Mãe Jersaun Foun</i> (also known as <i>Bolsa da Mãe - Nova Geração</i>), by which pregnant women receive \$15 per month, and caregivers receive \$20 per month, with an additional \$10 if the child has a disability. (40) The Government of Timor-Leste allocated \$7 million for the first phase of <i>Bolsa da Mãe Jersaun Foun</i> , for implementation in three municipalities, while still maintaining the <i>Bolsa da Mãe</i> program with \$6.2 million in funding. (41)

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description & Activities
<i>Casa Vida</i> †	Joint program between MSSJ and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's "Nabilan Program and Shelter" initiative. Provides shelter, health assistance, and psychological counseling to minor victims, including victims of child labor and its worst forms. (42) Provides specialized assistance for girls up to age 18 who have escaped situations of sexual violence. (17) Receives referrals from civil society organizations as well as the PNTLVPU. (43) Since its founding in 2006, <i>Casa Vida</i> has provided shelter and assistance for more than 300 children who were survivors of abuse, including child labor and its worst forms. (44) <i>Casa Vida</i> was active during the reporting period and received the Sérgio Vieira de Mello Human Rights Award from the President of Timor-Leste for contributing to the promotion, protection, and dissemination of human rights in Timor-Leste. (16,45)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting year.

† Program is funded by the Government of Timor-Leste.

Although the government has implemented programs to address child labor, research found no evidence that it has developed programs to assist children working in agriculture and on family farms, or children involved in the worst forms of child labor. The Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons' work plan includes raising awareness of human trafficking among the populations most at risk, including students, minors, and large families. (34)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Timor-Leste (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law protects 17-year-old children from engagement in all the worst forms of child labor, such as illicit activities and commercial sexual exploitation.	2013 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for hazardous work from 17 to 18.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be undertaken.	2016 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work of 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that the Administration of the Labor Inspectorate General is staffed with the appropriate number of labor inspectors to conduct the targeted number of labor inspections.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the Administration of the Labor Inspectorate General conducts inspections in the informal sector, including on family farms and in private homes where domestic work takes place.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that labor law enforcement agencies receive sufficient funding to carry out inspections, especially in rural areas of Timor-Leste, including funding for fuel for government vehicles.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officials receive sufficient training on laws related to the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the Vulnerable Persons Unit receives funding to carry out investigations.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal and civil cases are tried in a timely manner and that cases of human trafficking are properly classified.	2019 – 2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement data related to the number of investigations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Timor-Leste.	2016 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken on an annual basis to implement the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan (2011–2030).	2017 – 2022
	Establish a policy for girls to be able to receive an education while pregnant and to encourage them to return to school after giving birth.	2020 – 2022
Social Programs	Cease the practice of forcing pregnant students to leave school, ensure that they can obtain transfer documentation to continue their education during pregnancy if needed, and provide these students with assistance so they can return to school after giving birth.	2022
	Improve access to education by providing safe and healthy sanitation facilities, especially for girls, making schools accessible for children with disabilities, and eliminating school-related fees.	2018 – 2022
	Institute programs to address child labor and the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture.	2017 – 2022

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

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In 2022, Togo made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government launched the Savanes Emergency Plan, which by strengthening education access and social welfare in the areas of the north affected by violent extremism, also addresses poverty, conflict, and lack of educational access as root causes of child labor. Meanwhile, the Safety Nets and Basic Services Project provided meals to school children in vulnerable communities and expanded unconditional cash transfers to 83,681 program participants. Furthermore, Togo eliminated fees for birth certificates, which may improve access to education and other social services. However, children in Togo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in domestic work. The government has not devoted sufficient resources to allow the labor inspectorate to conduct inspections in all sectors and fully enforce the law. In addition, hazardous work regulations are insufficient because they allow children as young as 15 to perform some types of hazardous tasks, including carrying heavy loads. Finally, the government does not publish data related to its criminal enforcement efforts with regard to laws on the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Togo. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	44.4 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	89.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	50.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2022, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2017. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/ Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working in agriculture, including spraying pesticides† and handling fertilizers† (3) Herding animals (3,4)
Industry	Working in gravel quarries and sand mines, including excavating and carrying heavy loads† (3-5) Construction (6) Production of charcoal (3)
Services	Domestic work† (3,7) Begging and working as vendors and porters in the markets, sometimes carrying heavy loads† (2,3,5,6) Work as motorcycle repairmen (6,8,9) Garbage scavenging (6,8) Working at restaurants, sometimes at night (3,10)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging (5,8,11) Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,11,12) Forced labor in agriculture, including in the production of coffee, cocoa, and cotton; in mining; in mechanic shops; in domestic work; in quarries; and in markets (7,11-13) Use in illicit activities, including the transportation and sale of drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (11)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Togo is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking. Children from Benin and Ghana are trafficked to Togo for forced labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, while Togolese children are often trafficked to neighboring West African countries, where they are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in agriculture and domestic work. (11,12,14) Children are also trafficked within Togo, primarily for domestic work, work in agriculture and markets, and commercial sexual exploitation. (15,16) The rural areas in central and northern Togo are major source regions for child trafficking. Traffickers illicitly and deceptively recruit children by promising impoverished parents lucrative employment for their children. (11,12,17) In addition, in a practice known as *confiage*, parents sometimes send their children to live with a friend or relative in a larger town or city. These children are often not sent to school and are subjected to labor exploitation and sexual abuse. (3,7,13,18) Research suggests that the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Togo may have led to an increase in children subjected to labor and sexual exploitation in recent years. (3)

While free public primary education is guaranteed under Togolese law, due to funding shortages, some primary schools charge supplemental fees to pay volunteer teachers not employed directly by the government. (19) Free education is not yet guaranteed at the secondary level. As a result, there is a significant decline in school enrollment between primary and secondary school, leaving children vulnerable to child labor. (20,21) In 2022, for the second year in a row, the government announced that school fees would not be collected for public secondary schools for the 2022–2023 academic year. (10,22,23) Even when school fees are not charged, associated costs—including uniforms, books, and school supplies—make education prohibitively expensive for many families. (15,19,24) Research found that insufficient numbers of schools; poor school infrastructure, including inadequate sanitation and lack of access to toilets and water; physical and sexual violence; and long travel distances to school pose additional barriers for some children, especially in rural areas. (3,19,20,25) In northern Togo, in the Savanes region, the government issued a state of security emergency in June 2022 due to terrorist threats. Additionally, seasonal floods ruined crops, resulting in internal displacement and increased child vulnerability. (11) The government closed several schools due to the security crisis. Moreover, both refugees and internally-displaced people face difficulty registering children for school due to lack of identity documents. (3) In early 2022, however, the government eliminated fees for birth registration. This initiative addresses a barrier to education, and thus may ultimately reduce children's vulnerability to labor exploitation. (3,26)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Togo has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Togo's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of guaranteed free basic education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 192, 193, and 354 of the Labor Code; Article 262 of the Children's Code; Article 881.1a of the Penal Code (27-29)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 2, 192, 193, and 354 of the Labor Code; Arrêté 1556 Determining Dangerous Work Forbidden for Children (28,30)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 2, 263, and 264 of the Children's Code; Article 319.9 of the Penal Code; Articles 192 and 193 of the Labor Code; Articles 1–11 and annex of Arrêté 1556 Determining Dangerous Work Forbidden for Children (27-30)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 7, 19, and 192 of the Labor Code; Articles 2, 264, and 411 of the Children's Code; Articles 150.3 and 151 of the Penal Code (27-29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 192 and 356 of the Labor Code; Articles 2–6 and 10-11 of Law No. 2005-009 Suppressing Child Trafficking in Togo; Articles 2, 264, and 411–414 of the Children's Code; Articles 150.3, 151, 317–323, and 882 of the Penal Code (27-29,31)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 192 of the Labor Code; Articles 264, 276.f, and 387–390 of the Children's Code; Article 224 of the Penal Code (27-29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 192 and 356 of the Labor Code; Articles 2, 264, 276.i, and 405 of the Children's Code; Articles 317.7, 318, 319, and 329 of the Penal Code (27-29)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 426 of the Children's Code; Article 6, 7, and 42 of Law No. 2007-010 Regarding the General Statute of the Togolese Armed Forces (27,32)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Articles 2 and 426 of the Children's Code; Articles 146.14, 147.11, and 342 of the Penal Code (27,29)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 2 and 426 of the Children's Code; Articles 146.14, 147.11, and 342 of the Penal Code (27,29)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 35 of the Constitution; Article 255 of the Children's Code (27,33)
Free Public Education	No		Article 35 of the Constitution; Law No. 97-16 For the Creation of a Support Fund for Education; Décret 2008-129/PR for the Abolition of School Fees in Pre-Primary and Primary Schools (33-35)

* Country has no conscription (32)

While Togo's Arrêté 1556 prohibits several types of hazardous work for children under age 18, it still permits children as young as age 15 to perform some hazardous tasks, such as transporting heavy loads. This permission violates Article 3(3) of Convention 138, which permits children as young as age 16 (but not age 15) to perform hazardous tasks as long as their health, safety, and morals are fully protected, and they receive adequate training. (30,34,35) In addition, the law provides for free schooling only through primary school, while basic education is a total of 9 years and includes 3 years of lower secondary school. The failure to provide for complete free basic education may increase the risk of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor. (33-36)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Dialogue	Conducts labor inspections and enforces labor laws, including child labor laws. (10) Runs a Committee for Social Reintegration of Children, which coordinates efforts on child trafficking. (3) Through its National Cell for the Elimination of Child Labor, coordinates the day-to-day operations of the National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor, withdraws children from child labor situations, raises awareness, and collects data. (3,37)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Justice and Government Relations	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor and prosecutes violators. (3,10)
Ministry of Security's General Directorate of Judicial Police	Investigates crimes involving child victims, including child trafficking. Operates as part of the National Police in all five regions of Togo. (10,15,38)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Togo took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Dialogue that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$39,061 (10)	\$62,683 (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	123 (10)	125 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (10)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10)	906 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	21 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (3)

The Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Dialogue lacks sufficient resources for fuel and transportation, which may hinder its ability to conduct inspections. (3) Routine inspections were conducted in the formal sector; however, the majority of child labor occurs in the informal sector, in which inspectors are legally allowed to inspect but rarely do. (6,39) Although they are legally permitted to do so, inspectors did not inspect private farms or homes, in which children work in agriculture and domestic work. (3,28,40) While a mechanism exists to refer survivors of child labor to social services, during the reporting year, social assistance was not provided in the 21 cases of child labor found by labor inspectors. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Togo took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including deficient structures for investigation and prosecution planning.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (3)

In June 2022, 80 law enforcement and judicial actors attended trainings on trafficking in persons. (11) In December 2022, criminal law enforcement arrested a seamstress in Sokode, Central Region, for subjecting five apprentices, all girls, to commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor as waitresses in her bar at night. (3)

While there is a referral mechanism between criminal law enforcement and social services, shortcomings exist in the coordination between police, social workers, and the justice system during the prosecution process. (12,16) Research suggests that the absence of trafficking focal points for trafficking issues within the Gendarmerie and Ministry of Interior was a barrier to effective coordination of law enforcement. (12) Assize Courts in Lomé and Kara handle all human trafficking cases, but research indicates that the courts are overburdened and slow, which deters victims from participating. (11,12,16) In addition, investigators lacked resources to adequately enforce the law. (3,10) Research indicates that trafficking survivors are often reluctant to testify or assist with prosecution because their family members were complicit in the trafficking case. (16) Cases involving child trafficking may be settled outside of court due to difficulties gathering evidence. Also, Ministry of Justice officials may be reluctant to impose fines or prison sentences in cases in which parents are involved due to a fear of perpetuating the poverty that originally led the parents to violate child trafficking laws. (5,15,40)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor	Serves as the coordinating government body for child labor issues. Includes representatives from 17 ministries and NGOs. (3) Was active during the reporting period reviewing and promoting the 2020–2024 National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (3)

The National Committee for the Reception and Social Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking gathers data on child trafficking and coordinates protection for survivors. The committee is housed under the Ministry of Labor and includes representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Health, Security, and Foreign Affairs. (16) Research suggests that despite receiving funds from the ILO, UNICEF, and Expertise France, the committee faced operational challenges due to lack of financial resources. (16) In 2022, the committee held training workshops on trafficking in persons for local elected officials in the Savanes, Kara, and Plateau regions. (11) In addition, the National Commission Against Trafficking in Persons, created in 2021, has a mandate to coordinate government-wide efforts to address child trafficking. (12) In 2022, the government appointed 13 officials to serve as members of the Commission, including the Ministry of Social Action's Director-General of Child Protection as the chair. (11)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of incorporation of child labor prevention and elimination strategies into the National Education Plan.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2020–2024)	Taking a multisectoral approach, aims to take into account the formal and informal economies in the effort to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. (4,15,35) During the reporting period, the government carried out awareness-raising activities for the plan in all five regions of the country. (3)
Savanes Emergency Plan, 2022–2025 (<i>Programme d'Urgence pour les Savanes</i>)†	Aims to strengthen community resilience in communities affected by violent extremism and terrorist attacks in the northern region. Activities include strengthening access to quality education and social welfare. (3) During the reporting period, the government established and began implementing this policy. (3)

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Policy	Description & Activities
Trilateral Agreement to Combat Child Trafficking	Trilateral agreement between the Governments of Togo, Benin, and Burkina Faso to address child trafficking. Lays out specific responsibilities for origin, transit, and destination countries and aims for enhanced border controls and regional coordination (6,16,41) In December 2022, Togo cooperated with the Governments of Burkina Faso and Benin, as well as that of Côte d'Ivoire, on a joint operation that resulted in the arrest of 15 suspected traffickers and the release and reintegration of 90 child trafficking survivors. (42)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

While the Education Sector Plan (2020–2030) does not directly address eliminating child labor, it includes efforts to stimulate demand for education, including targeting localities where school access and retention are weak, especially for girls. It also proposes the gradual expansion of free lower secondary education for all students, and free upper secondary education for girls. (19,35)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Reference Center for Guidance and Care of Children in Difficult Situations	Ministry of Social Action, Promotion of Women, and Literacy (MASPFA)-run shelter in Lomé that receives child trafficking and child labor survivors referred through Allô 1011, a MASPFA-run hotline that receives reports of child abuse, including child trafficking. Provides shelter as well as legal, medical, psychological, and social services. (16) During the reporting year, the shelter received and provided services to survivors of child trafficking and child labor. (12)
Program of Cooperation UNICEF/Togo, 2019–2023	Aims to enhance child survival, education and development, child protection, and social inclusion in Togo. Includes efforts to reduce child vulnerability to exploitation, including by enhancing access to education, especially for girls. (43) During the reporting year, UNICEF coordinated with the government to identify and refer 186,190 children with undeclared births for registration. (26)
World Bank-Funded Programs	Aim to address child labor by improving social safety nets for vulnerable families and by increasing access to education. The Safety Nets and Basic Services Project, a \$29 million project implemented by MASPFA and the Ministry of Grassroots Development, aims to provide social safety nets to poor communities. (10,44) During the reporting period, the program expanded unconditional cash transfers to 83,681 program participants and provided meals to schoolchildren in vulnerable communities. (44) The Improving Quality and Equity of Basic Education Project (2020–2026) aims to enhance teaching and learning quality, to improve equitable access to basic education in select regions, particularly among girls, and to strengthen sector management. (21) During the reporting period, the program provided training for educators, carried out activities supporting the reproduction and distribution of textbooks, and completed preparatory activities for school construction in the Savanes and Kara regions. (45)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (16)

Social programs focus on alleviating poverty and promoting education rather than targeting specific sectors of child labor, such as domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, and agriculture. The government relies heavily on NGOs and international organizations for the implementation of social programs. (3,10)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Togo (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for all types of hazardous work from age 15 to age 16, and ensure that children under age 18 who are engaged in hazardous work receive adequate training in the type of work being done and that the health, safety, and morals of the child are protected in accordance with international standards.	2020 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic education, including lower secondary education.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors have adequate resources, including fuel and transportation, to carry out inspections and monitoring of labor laws.	2009 – 2022
	Conduct labor inspections in the informal sector as well as private homes and farms, in which children work in agriculture and domestic work.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the targeting of routine inspections and numbers of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors refer all cases of child labor found in labor inspections to social services.	2022
	Publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of investigations conducted, criminal violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and penalties imposed for the worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal investigators have adequate resources to enforce laws against child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Investigate, prosecute, and impose penalties for convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that court system processes for addressing child trafficking are timely so as not to deter victims from reporting.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure effective coordination between the criminal justice system and social services to allow survivors to receive adequate support during judicial proceedings.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Committee for the Reception and Social Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking receives adequate funding.	2021 – 2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Sector Plan.	2013 – 2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education by eliminating school-related fees; ensuring that schools are free from sexual and physical violence; increasing the number of schools; enhancing access to birth registration, including for displaced children; and improving school infrastructure and transportation, especially in rural areas.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that social programs specifically target child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and agriculture in addition to alleviating poverty and promoting education.	2019 – 2022

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Although research found no evidence that child labor exists in Tokelau, in 2022, the government made minimal advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The government partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund to launch the Pacific Region Inclusive Education Review to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, have access to quality education. However, the government has not established adequate legal protections to prevent the worst forms of child labor. The law does not criminally prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution; the production of pornography, or pornographic performances, or the use of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, Tokelau has not established a minimum age for work and lacks a law that prohibits hazardous occupations and activities for children.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides one key indicator on children's education in Tokelau.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Primary Completion Rate (%)		147.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Although education in Tokelau is free, some children struggle to access reliable transportation to attend school. (2,3)

In 2022, the Government of Tokelau, in partnership with UNICEF, conducted a national survey on the state of inclusive education. (4) The survey found that all schools have classrooms that are accessible and safe for all, and that most schools have sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities that are accessible and safe for all. (5)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Tokelau is a territory of New Zealand; however, New Zealand statutory law does not apply to Tokelau unless it is expressly extended to Tokelau. (6) International treaties are applied only with the consent of the Government of Tokelau. As a result, New Zealand's ratification of conventions does not apply automatically to Tokelau. (3,6) None of the key international child labor conventions ratified by New Zealand have been made applicable to Tokelau. (3)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 2). However, gaps exist in Tokelau's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No		
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 33 of the Government of New Zealand's Defense Act (7)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 63(1) of the Tokelau Crimes, Procedures, and Evidence Rules Act (8)
Free Public Education	Yes		Part 1, Section 3 of the Government of New Zealand's Education Act (9)

* Country has no conscription (7,10)

† Country has no standing military (7)

Tokelau has not established legislation on the minimum age for work, nor has the government determined the minimum age for hazardous work or the types of work that are hazardous for children. The government also does not prohibit slavery or slavery-like practices such as forced labor. (11) Tokelau's trafficking provision does not clearly criminalize domestic trafficking or the trafficking of children in the absence of force, fraud, or coercion. In addition, the government does not criminalize the use, procuring, or offering of children for prostitution, pornography, or pornographic performances. (11) Tokelau has also not criminalized the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. (8) Although there are no armed forces in Tokelau, the law does not criminally prohibit non-state armed groups from recruiting children under age 18. (11)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the Government of Tokelau has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
National Assembly (General Fono)	Hears cases related to child welfare concerns, including child labor, if local village leaders are unable to resolve the case at the local level. (3)
New Zealand Ombudsman	Addresses and, if necessary, investigates citizens' complaints against a government office, including complaints related to child labor, child health, safety, and education. (3)
Tokelau Police	Enforces the islands' laws. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor. However, the Government of Tokelau has established a policy related to child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	The United Nations Pacific Strategy was a multi-national strategic framework program comprising South Pacific nations. The strategy aimed to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. (12) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the strategy during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in Tokelau (Table 5).

Table 5. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Establish a minimum age for work of at least age 16 that equals the compulsory age of education.	2016 – 2022
	Ratify ILO Convention 182, the convention concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.	2022
	Ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.	2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Phonography.	2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2022
	Establish age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work and identify hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit forced labor, including debt bondage and slavery.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that laws prohibit the trafficking of children domestically and internationally for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, and do not require the use of force to be established for the crime of trafficking.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use, procuring, and offering a child for prostitution, the production of pornography, and pornographic performances.	2017 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the forced or compulsory recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy and that data on these activities are published during the reporting period.	2019 – 2022
	Establish a reliable transportation program to ensure that children are able to attend school.	2018 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Tonga made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government launched its Future-Ready Children program to expand remote learning opportunities for students and support the drafting of a child protection policy. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Tonga is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Research indicates that Tonga lacks a functioning labor inspectorate for the enforcement of labor laws and regulations. Labor inspections are a key tool for identifying child labor violations, and their absence makes children more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Children in Tonga are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in farming and fishing. There are no laws specifying a minimum age for work, defining hazardous forms of work for children under age 18, or prohibiting the use of children for the production and trafficking of drugs, leaving children unprotected from labor exploitation. In addition, the government has not established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Tonga.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	46.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	47.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		97.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2022, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Subsistence farming and fishing (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced domestic work (4,5)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,6)
	Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs (7,8)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Research indicates that Tonga is a source and destination country for the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (4,9) Reporting also indicates that the methamphetamine epidemic has resulted in drug dealers recruiting school-age children to assist with drug deliveries, while also getting them addicted to the drug. (10-12) In addition, children as young as age 13 have reportedly been arrested for possession of drugs for the purposes of distribution. (13)

The Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai underwater volcano erupted 40 miles from Tonga's capital on January 15, 2022, which affected at least 28,000 children and damaged homes, businesses, and schools. (14-16) In addition, many school buildings remain inaccessible to students with physical disabilities, resulting in lower attendance rates for children with disabilities compared to children without disabilities at all educational levels. (13,14)




Tonga

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Tonga has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Tonga's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of minimum age for work and hazardous work protections.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No		
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Sections 2, 69, and 70 of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act (17)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Sections 2 and 69 of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act (17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 115A and 126 of the Criminal Offenses Act (18,19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Section 25 of the Defense Services Act (20)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Section 25 of the Defense Services Act (20)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Section 98 of the Education Act 2013 (21)
Free Public Education	No		Sections 95 and 98 of the Education Act 2013 (21)

* Country has no conscription (20)

The Parliament has not established a minimum age for work or hazardous work, nor has it determined the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (22,23) In addition, although Article 70 of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act prohibits some aspects of forced labor, it does not comprehensively or explicitly criminalize forced labor or slavery. (17) The Criminal Offenses Act prohibits the procurement of women and girls under age 21 for commercial sexual exploitation, but it does not criminalize the procurement of boys for the same. In addition, the Act does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation, because the use of children under age 14 in the production of pornography is not criminally prohibited. (19) There are no criminal prohibitions that specifically prohibit using children in illicit activities, particularly in the production

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

and trafficking of drugs, nor the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups. (20) The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act is not sufficient to prohibit child trafficking because trafficking children within the borders of the Kingdom is not a criminal offense. (17) Tonga has not established free public education because current legislation allows for fees to be charged to attend school, and those students who do not pay the fees may be refused admission to school, which greatly increases the risk of child labor. (21)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

Tonga lacks a functioning labor inspectorate for the enforcement of labor laws and regulations (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Trade and Economic Development (MTED)	Employs business license inspectors who are instructed to look for occurrences of child labor during their field inspections. If the Ministry receives a complaint, the chief officer inspector visits the site in question, carries out an investigation, and requests police involvement if children are found to be engaged in labor. (14) Child labor inspections are complaint-driven, with police called in for suspected cases of child labor. As the Ministry did not receive or record any formal complaints related to child labor during the reporting period, no labor inspections were carried out during 2022. (4, 14) Inadequate resources, including a lack of funding to hire and train business license inspectors, also hampered the government's capacity to enforce child labor laws in Tonga. (14) In addition, the government has yet to establish an adequate referral mechanism among enforcement personnel and social services providers. (13)
Tonga Police, Transnational Crime Unit, and Domestic Violence Unit	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Respond to forced child labor and human trafficking violations and allegations of commercial sexual exploitation. (13)
Ministry of Internal Affairs, Immigration Department	Collaborates with Tonga Police and MTED on the enforcement of criminal cases related to the worst forms of child labor in which foreign nationals are involved. (13)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Tonga took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the lack of a referral mechanism.

Table 6. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (13)	No (14)
Number of Investigations	0 (13)	0 (14)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (13)	0 (14)
Number of Convictions	0 (13)	0 (14)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (13)	Unknown (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (13)	No (14)

The police department coordinates with NGOs to refer women and children needing support to social services, including safe houses and counseling, though no formal referral mechanism exists. (4, 14)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government has an established mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 7). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 7. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Addressed, developed, and implemented strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and its worst forms. A multinational strategic framework program that consisted of 14 South Pacific nations. (24) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program in Tonga during the reporting period.
Migration and Sustainable Development Policy	Protects vulnerable children at risk of human trafficking, provides support to survivors, and prosecutes perpetrators of human trafficking. Supports the advancement and protection of youth, especially unaccompanied minors and youth with disabilities who are victims of forced migration. (25) Promotes youth employment, supports youth vocational training, and expands youth programming. (25) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

Although the Government of Tonga has adopted a 15-year policy improvement framework for Tonga's education system in partnership with the Government of New Zealand and has instituted the Tonga Strategic Development Plan Nine that indirectly addresses the root causes of child labor, strategies to prevent and eliminate child labor have not been integrated into those plans. (13)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy to address the problem in all relevant sectors.

Table 8. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	Prioritized children's rights, including the elimination of child labor and its worst forms. This was a multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy (2018–2022). (26,27) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program in Tonga during the reporting period.
<i>Fakafuo 'o e tangata ma'ae kaha'u</i> (Future-Ready Children) (2022-2025)*	Partnership between the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Training, and Save the Children that will expand remote learning opportunities for students and support the drafting of a child protection policy. (28,29)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (13,30)

Although the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program addresses the elimination of the worst forms of child labor, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children in commercial sexual exploitation, agriculture, and fishing. (26) In human trafficking cases involving children, the police refer survivors to NGOs for safe housing and counseling. The government helps to fund these services. (4)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Tonga (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2017 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2017 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2017 – 2022
	Establish a minimum age for work of at least 15 years, and preferably up to the compulsory education age of 18.	2009 – 2022

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Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Establish age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work.	2009 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits forced labor, including debt bondage and slavery.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits all forms of trafficking of children, including within the borders of the Kingdom.	2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits all forms of commercial sexual exploitation for both girls and boys under age 18.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish a functioning labor inspectorate for the enforcement of labor laws and regulations.	2019 – 2022
	Hire and train labor inspectors to conduct workplace inspections, including routine inspections outside of responses to complaints of child labor.	2016 – 2022
	Establish a formal referral mechanism between enforcement personnel and social services providers to protect and rehabilitate children involved in child labor, including its worst forms.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that enforcement personnel receive training and resources necessary to enforce laws prohibiting child labor, including laws related to the worst forms of child labor, and conduct refresher courses.	2013 – 2022
Coordination	Establish a coordinating mechanism to address the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into relevant policies.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement the Migration and Sustainable Development Policy and publish results from activities implemented on an annual basis.	2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including its worst forms, to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to make education accessible for all children, including by updating school buildings for students with disabilities.	2018 – 2022
	Implement programs to address all worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, agriculture, and fishing.	2010 – 2022

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In 2022, Tunisia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In March 2022, the government adopted a guide for labor inspectors when they encounter child labor. It also launched a digital platform to improve coordination among agencies who respond to child abuse, including child labor, and opened two new schools to help students who had dropped out of school reintegrate back into education or job skills training. However, children in Tunisia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work and begging. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work. The budget for staffing and logistics, such as for fuel and transportation, is inadequate to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of the country. In addition, the government was unable to provide complete data on its law enforcement efforts due to delays in the digitization of court records.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Tunisia.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.0 (50,364)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	2.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		104.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 4), 2011–2012. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3,4)
	Fishing, activities unknown (3)
	Animal husbandry, activities unknown (3)
	Forestry, activities unknown (3)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown (3,4)
	Manufacturing and industrial work (3,5)
Services	Domestic work† (3,5,6)
	Street work† (7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,8)
	Use in illicit activities, including stealing and drug trafficking (7-10)
	Forced labor in domestic work and begging (4,7,11)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Child protection delegations have received more than 500 reports of children involved in begging or other economic exploitation. (12) The majority of human trafficking cases investigated by Tunisian authorities over the last year were related to child begging and there were 152 such cases reported by the Ministry of the Interior (MOI). (13) Young girls from Tunisia's northwest and other interior regions are particularly vulnerable to human

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trafficking. (7,14) Refugees and migrants who lack legal documentation, including child migrants from sub-Saharan African countries and those fleeing unrest in neighboring countries, are vulnerable to labor exploitation because refugees and migrants do not have the status to legally work in Tunisia. (10,15) Native Tunisians are also leaving the country due to economic unrest and are vulnerable to exploitation while immigrating. (15-17) In November 2022, Tunisia's first national survey on international migration was released; the survey may be helpful in determining the needs of child migrants and improving anti-trafficking efforts. (18)

Approximately 30,000 more students dropped out of school in 2022 as compared to 2021, and representatives in all six of Tunisia's regions have noted an increase in students dropping out of secondary school. (16,19) More than half a million young Tunisians are neither employed nor pursuing education or training. (20) In addition, many of those who drop out of school choose to migrate out of the country to find other opportunities, sometimes unaccompanied, increasing their risk of exploitation and trafficking. (16,21) Furthermore, there is inadequate transportation to schools in rural areas, an insufficient number of teachers, and many schools did not open on time at the beginning of the 2022 school year due to low COVID-19 vaccination rates. (4,22)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Tunisia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 53 of the Labor Code (23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 58 of the Labor Code (23)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Ministry of Social Affairs Order of April 1, 2020 (24)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 105, 171, 224, and 250 of the Penal Code; Articles 2.1, 2.5, 2.6, and 8.0 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (25,26)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 3, 5, 8, and 23 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (26)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 226 <i>ter</i> , 232, and 234 of the Penal Code; Article 25 of the Child Protection Code; Article 2.7 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (25-27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 5 and 11 of Law No. 92.52 on Narcotics (28)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 2 of the National Service Law (29)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of the National Service Law (29)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 2(5) of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons; Articles 3 and 18 of the Child Protection Code (26,27)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 1 of the Law on Education (30)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 38 and 46 of the Constitution; Law on Education (30,31)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA)	Conducts labor inspections and assesses fines and penalties for infractions. (5,23) Employs social workers and medical inspectors to assist in addressing issues of child labor. (5,9) Collaborates with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health (MOH) to identify and provide support to children vulnerable to child labor. (5) Monitors the implementation of labor legislation and initiates prosecutions through the General Directorate of Labor Inspection. (5,32) Implements social and orientation programs for minors related to child labor through the General Administration for Social Development. (5,32)
Ministry of Family, Women, Children and the Elderly (MFWCE)	Gathers evidence and conducts investigations on child welfare cases; conducts needs assessments and implements intervention plans. (5,33) Provides services to child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. (33,34) Trains child protection delegates to address child labor in the field through coordination with local governments and civil society. (34) Acts as judicial police in cases of imminent danger to children through its Delegates for the Protection of Children. (5,27) In December 2022, launched a digital platform to improve coordination among service responders who address abuse against children, including child labor. (5)
Ministry of the Interior (MOI)	Investigates reports of the worst forms of child labor, including complaints that fall outside of the labor inspectorate's mandate and those pertaining to the informal sector. (5) Through its Child Protection Service in the National Police, addresses the commercial sexual exploitation of children and coordinates with MSA and MFWCE regarding violations. (5,34) Through its Judicial Police, coordinates with MSA to refer cases of at-risk youth to social services. (5)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Tunisia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including financial penalties too low to serve as an adequate deterrent.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$6,139,671 (35)	\$4,700,000 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	328 (35)	346 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (4)	Yes (23)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A (35)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	143 (35)	117 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	63 (35)	28 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	4 (35)	1 (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	Unknown (5)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (4)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (35)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (36)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (4,36)

A lack of government cars and fuel have impacted the labor inspectorate's ability to effectively carry out inspections. (5) Government officials have also noted that the budget for the inspectorate is insufficient because it does not adequately provide for facilities, fuel, and transportation. (5) Although there are labor inspectors who monitor the informal sector in Ariana, Jendouba, Medenine, Sfax, Sousse, Tunis, and Tozeur, officials note that the labor inspectorate lacks resources to adequately monitor the informal economy in other parts the country. (34) Civil fines range from approximately \$7 to \$21 per infraction (20 to 60 Tunisian dinars) and are doubled for repeat offenders, though the total amount levied cannot exceed \$1,667 (5,000 Tunisian dinars). As a result, civil fines remain insufficient to deter potential violators. (34)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Tunisia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the lack of publication of criminal law enforcement data.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (4)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	147 (35)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	3 (35)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	Unknown (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (5)

The Ministry of Justice does not maintain comprehensive data on its efforts to address child labor, as most records are not digitized. (33,34) However, it does maintain statistics on human trafficking cases, which indicate that 59 percent of the suspected human traffickers who were prosecuted during the reporting period were charged with crimes related to the exploitation of children. (13) Research found that judges are sometimes reluctant to impose strong penalties for human trafficking charges due in part to a low level of awareness on the part of police and judicial authorities of the proper application of the anti-human trafficking law and how to handle human trafficking cases. Authorities also sometimes conflate human trafficking with migrant smuggling. (10,34) Although MOI reports that children under the age of 18 are not routinely detained for involvement in illicit activities, there have been isolated incidents of law enforcement punishing children for their involvement in the worst forms of child labor. (34) During the reporting period, the government prosecuted 10 children—5 boys and 5 girls—on charges of human trafficking, which raises concerns that children, who may be survivors of exploitation themselves, are being prosecuted for their involvement in trafficking activities. (13)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Leadership Committee to Combat Child Labor	Coordinates efforts to address child labor as part of the Child Labor National Action Plan (PAN-TN). Led by MSA and includes membership of 11 other ministries and 3 unions, with support from ILO. (4,36) In March 2022, adopted a guide for labor inspectors with information about Tunisian labor laws and assistance for children found to be engaged in child labor. (20,22) The committee also held a workshop with personnel from four governorates (Arian, Ben Arous, Manouba, and Tunis) to increase their collaboration on issues related to child labor. (20)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Child Labor National Action Plan (PAN-TN)	Raises awareness, builds the capacity of stakeholders, encourages action from NGOs and the public, and promotes the implementation of existing laws and policies. (37,38) In 2022, focused on building a strategic plan for Child Labor Units within MSA. (20)
National Strategy for the Combat of Trafficking in Persons (2018–2023)	Aims to establish a global evidence-based approach to address trafficking in persons by coordinating national and international actors. (7,39) In 2022, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training participated in this plan and assisted juvenile delinquents, who have been reprimanded or are in prison, to return to school. (5)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Support Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking (2014–2022)	USDOS-funded project implemented by IOM to carry out anti-human trafficking activities in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, MOI, MSA, and MFWCE. Included three objectives: (1) building the capacity of relevant institutions and agencies to identify and assist survivors of human trafficking based on their individual needs; (2) strengthening cross-sector cooperation and the sharing of information through the implementation of a national referral mechanism; and (3) conducting an awareness-raising campaign to keep children in school and discourage irregular migration that could lead to human trafficking. (5,34)
Centers to Provide Aid to Victims of Child Labor†	Serve up to 6,000 children engaged in child labor or vulnerable to child labor through the maintenance of 79 youth centers. (5,40) Many of these centers are located in Tunis and provide education and health care to children who would otherwise be on the street. The centers were active during the reporting period. (12)
Shelters and Services for Victims of Human Trafficking†	Serve survivors of human trafficking, predominantly children, through shelters operated by the Government of Tunisia. Provide lodging, food, clothing, legal aid through a network of pro bono lawyers, and free medical care in collaboration with MOH. (5) In 2022, provided shelter services to 139 child survivors of human trafficking. (13) During the reporting period, the MOH coordinated with the Council of Europe to provide psychological care to commercially sexually exploited children. (18) More than half of the survivors of human trafficking receiving services from MOH in 2022 were children. (13) While authorities report that shelters are accessible to those with disabilities, there is a lack of staff who can communicate in sign language. (13,33)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Tunisia.

The Second Chance program is funded by the Tunisian government and works in cooperation with UNICEF to reintegrate school dropouts into education or job training. The program launched two new schools in 2022. (5,20) Although Tunisia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in agriculture, fishing, commerce, manufacturing, domestic work,

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and construction. In addition, while the National Authority to Combat Trafficking in Persons works to ensure the safety of child survivors of labor exploitation and trafficking in persons, options for survivors' long-term support and possible relocation remain extremely limited. (10,14) Nonprofits have noted that there is a need for more coordination between themselves, law enforcement, and healthcare providers to better provide care to trafficking survivors and bring their traffickers to justice. (13)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Tunisia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Provide adequate staff and other resources, including fuel and transportation, to enable the labor inspectorate to conduct a greater number of inspections, particularly in remote areas and in the informal economy.	2015 – 2022
	Collect and publish information related to the penalties collected as it relates to the civil enforcement of child labor violations.	2013 – 2022
	Collect and publish information on criminal law enforcement of child labor laws, including on the number of criminal child labor investigations that were conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions secured, and penalties imposed for child labor crimes.	2019 – 2022
	Increase penalties for those who employ children in violation of child labor law protections to deter potential violations and reduce recidivism.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that law enforcement and the judiciary are fully informed as to the existence and application of anti-human trafficking penalties and impose these penalties when appropriate.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that exploited children are not prosecuted for their involvement in trafficking activities.	2022
Social Programs	Research and publish detailed information on the involvement of children in child labor, as well as those at risk of being involved, and publish this information to inform policies and programs.	2022
	Address barriers to education, especially for children in rural areas, such as unreliable transportation to schools.	2015 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to fully address the scope of the child labor problem, including in agriculture, fishing, commerce, manufacturing, domestic work, and construction.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that services for survivors of human trafficking are accessible to those with disabilities and that interpretation services for all relevant languages, including sign language, are available to assist survivors in receiving services.	2022
	Establish long-term support and relocation options for survivors of child labor, including child trafficking.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Tuvalu made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Advisory Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child worked on developing a child protection policy for schools. However, although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Tuvalu engage in child labor in fishing and domestic work. The government has not specified, by national law or regulation, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, leaving children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. In addition, Tuvalu lacks information on labor law and criminal law enforcement efforts.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Tuvalu.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	8.5 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	79.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	8.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		88.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019–2020. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Fishing, activities unknown (3)
Services	Domestic work, activities unknown (4,5)







The Tuvalu Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6) 2019–2020, which provides the most recent and comprehensive data on child labor in Tuvalu, found that 4 percent of children ages 5 to 17 were working under conditions of child labor. The survey also reported that 16 percent of children were engaging in hazardous activities that included carrying heavy loads, working with dangerous tools, and operating heavy machinery, among others. (4) However, the MICS 6 did not specify the sectors in which children in Tuvalu were engaged in child labor. (4)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Tuvalu has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Tuvalu's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 42 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act (6)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 44 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act (6)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 3 and 68 of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act; Articles 46–49 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act; Article 249 of the Penal Code; Article 18 of the Constitution of Tuvalu (6-9)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 3 and 68 of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act; Article 136 of the Penal Code (7,9)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 46 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act; Articles 136 and 140–143 of the Penal Code (6,7)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 46 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act; Articles 141–142 of the Penal Code (6,7)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 46 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act (6)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 3(1)(b) of the Compulsory Education Order (10)
Free Public Education	No		Article 33 of the Education Act (11)

† Country has no standing military (12)

The Government of Tuvalu has not specified, by national law or regulation, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children; previous provisions applied only to males under age 18 in the industrial, mining, and fishing sectors. (6,13) Research found that while primary school is free in practice for students up to age 13, the Education Act stipulates that fees can legally be charged for education. In addition, free primary school up to age 13 does not match the compulsory education age of 15, which leaves children ages 14 and 15 without free education. (5,10,11,14)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor and the Ministry of Public Works, Infrastructure, Environment, Labor, Meteorology and Disaster	Enforces labor laws, including those related to child labor. (15)
Tuvalu Police Force	Investigates and enforces criminal violations regarding child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. (5)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Tuvalu took actions to address child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	4 (15)	Unknown (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (6)	No (5)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (15)	No (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (15)	No (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (6)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (15)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (5)

In 2022, the ILO conducted consultations on international labor conventions with the government and civil society. (5) While labor inspectors cannot assess civil penalties, they may refer matters to the Office of Attorney General for criminal prosecution and the assessment of penalties upon conviction. (6) There is no formal referral mechanism, but the government's National Advisory Committee on Children's Rights (NACCRC) is an interagency collective coordinating child protection issues. Members of the committee can be contacted should a case of child labor be found. (5) Research could not ascertain whether routine labor inspections have been conducted, but there have been no inspections of risk-prone sectors. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Tuvalu took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	0 (15)	0 (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (15)	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (5)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (5)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Advisory Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (NACCRC)	Interagency collective that coordinates child protection issues and implements the Convention on the Rights of the Child to prevent and eliminate child labor. Led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) and includes representatives from the Tuvalu Police and Ministries of Labor and Social Welfare. (5, 15) Maintains a Child Protection Desk to support and coordinate the implementation of child protection efforts. (15) During the reporting year, the committee worked on developing a child protection policy for schools. (5)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established relevant policies related to child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Addressed, developed, and implemented strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and its worst forms. A multinational strategic framework program that consisted of 14 South Pacific nations. (16) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program in Tuvalu during the reporting period.
Child Protection Work Plan (2017)	Involves public relations activities, such as awareness raising and advocacy. (17) During the reporting period, the government continued to implement its child protection program although progress was restricted as technical assistance and support was only provided virtually. (5)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (10)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	Prioritized children's rights including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. This was a multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. (18) Research was unable to determine whether activities took place in Tuvalu in 2022.
Tuvalu Learning Project (2020–2025)	Prepares children entering first grade and increases the literacy of children in elementary school. Subcomponents include a study on student absenteeism, a gender analysis to understand why boys are dropping out of school more than girls, and trainings on child protection, gender-based violence, and disability inclusion. (19) Implemented by MEYS and funded by the World Bank. (19) This project remained active during the reporting period. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

Research found no evidence of programs that specifically address child labor in domestic work or the fishing sector.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Tuvalu (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013 – 2022
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2022
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for all children in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2017 – 2022
	Establish by law free public education for all children up to at least age 15 to align with the compulsory education age.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish labor law enforcement information, including labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspections conducted at worksite, number of child labor violations found, number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, whether routine inspections were conducted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2016 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties.	2022
	Institutionalize training for labor inspectors, including training for new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment.	2020 – 2022
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including if training was provided for criminal investigators, the number of investigations, the number of prosecutions initiated, and number of penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2022
	Conduct research to determine activities carried out by children working in the agriculture and services sector to inform policies and programs.	2010 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that all social programs that address child labor remain active and publish information on activities taken on an annual basis.	2022
	Institute programs to address child labor in domestic work and the fishing sector.	2009 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

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In 2022, Uganda made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The City of Kampala published an ordinance to prohibit the employment of children in hazardous work, including activities such as working in rock quarries and restaurants, collecting and selling scraps, and domestic work. The government also secured seven convictions for crimes related to child trafficking for labor purposes, approved a child labor inspection checklist, and released the results of a 2021 baseline survey on child labor in the rice and sugarcane growing areas in eastern Uganda. In addition, a National Child Focused Research Agenda (2022–2026) was launched, which enables evidence-based programming and includes research questions on child labor. However, children in Uganda are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in gold mining. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, Uganda's minimum age for hazardous work does not meet the international standard as the Employment of Children Regulations permit a commissioner to allow children ages 12 and older enrolled in an educational training or apprenticeship program to engage in hazardous work. Moreover, the law only guarantees free education through the primary level, even though international standards require free basic education through lower secondary school. In addition, the lack of a centralized supervisory authority, along with inadequate funding, training, and resources, hampered the capacity of law enforcement agencies to conduct child labor inspections and investigations.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Uganda.

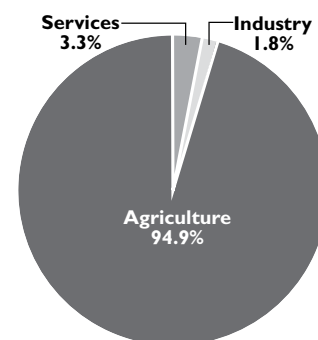
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	22.2 (2,525,644)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	85.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	25.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		52.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2016–2017. (2)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Cultivating and harvesting cocoa, coffee, corn, tea,† tobacco,† rice,† sugarcane,† and vanilla, and acting as scarecrows in rice fields (3-5)
	Working with livestock, including herding cattle† (5)
	Fishing,† including catching,† smoking,† and selling fish, and paddling† and loading boats† (5,6)
	Collecting grasshoppers (5,7)
Industry	Construction,† including making† and laying† bricks (5,8)
	Quarrying stone† and limestone, mining gold, marble, charcoal, sand,† tin, and salt (5,9)
	Manufacturing, including working in carpentry workshops† (5,10,11)
Services	Domestic work† (7,11,12)
	Street work, including vending,† begging,† car washing,† working as porters,† scavenging,† collecting plastic bottles, and collecting and selling scrap metal (5,7,11-14)
	Working in hair salons, hotels,† restaurants,† bars,† and video halls† (5,11-14)
	Producing alcoholic beverages (5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,15)
	Forced labor in agriculture, fishing, cattle herding, working in bars and restaurants, begging, brickmaking, mining, stone quarrying, street vending, and domestic work (5,8,10,15)
	Use in the production of pornography and pornographic performances (11,12)
	Use in illicit activities, including smuggling, burglary, cattle theft, and car and house break-ins, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (10-13)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In December 2022, military operations established that children had been recruited into ISIS-DRC from parts of Busoga in eastern Uganda, Kasese in western Uganda, and Wakiso and Luweero in central Uganda. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is currently working on these cases. (5) After strong government encouragement following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics published its 2021 National Labor Force Survey during the reporting period. Survey results indicated that 39.5 percent of children ages 5–17 were engaged in some form of child labor in the country, a percentage that was more than double the percentage reported in the 2019/2020 National Household Survey published in 2021, and that the Karamoja region had the highest rate of child labor at 56 percent. (16,17)

Ugandan children are lured by human traffickers from rural to urban areas and subsequently exploited in forced labor and sex trafficking. Ugandan children are also victims of forced labor and sex trafficking in neighboring countries, such as Kenya and Somalia, and in the Middle East and South Asia. (5,15,18,19) Furthermore, human traffickers exploit children from neighboring countries, including Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania, in forced agricultural labor, domestic servitude, and commercial sexual exploitation in Uganda. (15,19) Children from rural areas, especially the Karamoja region, are vulnerable to human trafficking, in which they are forced into begging, street vending, domestic work, or commercial sexual exploitation. (10,15,18) NGO and media reports have indicated that children from Karamoja are also sold in open-air markets or through intermediaries and forced into domestic work, begging, cattle herding, and commercial sexual exploitation. (11,15,20) The Ugandan People's Defense Force noted that cattle rustlers in the Karamoja region recruit children, especially boys, for violent cattle raids. An unspecified number of these children have been killed during military operations against the cattle rustlers, and according to the Committee on Gender, Labor, and Social Development, cattle raids also increase children's vulnerability to human trafficking. (5) In other parts of the country, girls worked in gold mines in Karamoja in northern Uganda, and boys grazed cattle in Rwenzori in western Uganda. Meanwhile, children in the Bidibidi refugee settlement in northwestern Uganda were engaged in hazardous labor, including working on farms and as domestic workers, which may include working long hours and physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. (13,21)

While Ugandan law provides for free compulsory education, the cost of school supplies, uniforms, and other materials often impedes some children from attending school. Research found that these fees are paid directly




to the schools, and if students are not able to pay the amount in full, they might be prevented from attending or completing their term. (5,22,23) Additional barriers to education for children include lack of teachers, poor school infrastructure, and lack of transportation, particularly in remote rural areas where children may have to walk very long distances to the nearest school. (11,12,24) Although free compulsory education laws apply equally to refugee children, research found that these children often are not enrolled in or not attending school. Girls, especially those in refugee camps, are at particular risk of being out of school and vulnerable to exploitation due to pressure to undertake domestic duties, gender-based violence, and harassment. (25,26) In addition, refugee children, particularly girls, may also face harassment due to their refugee status, and they may also experience language barriers. For a number of refugee settlements, such as Nakivale, schools are often located far from where refugees live and are inadequately equipped to meet the needs of the large student population. (5,27)

In late May 2023, Uganda enacted the Anti-Homosexuality Act, which allows for the prosecution and imprisonment of persons, including children, found to be committing or attempting to commit same-sex acts. (28) The law also requires mandatory reporting of those suspected of committing or intending to commit these acts. Research indicates that LGBTQI+ children are sometimes expelled or suspended from school, and this new law may increase discrimination against children and further interfere with their access to education. (29,30)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Uganda has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Uganda's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of free basic education guaranteed by law.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act (31)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act; Section 32 of the Employment Act; Regulations 5 and 8 of the Employment (Employment of Children) Regulations (31-33)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Regulation 6 and the First Schedule of the Employment (Employment of Children) Regulations; Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act (31,33)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2 and 5 of the Employment Act; Sections 3–5 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (32,34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 8 of the Children (Amendment) Act; Sections 2–6 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (31,34)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 8A of the Children (Amendment) Act; Sections 2–5 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Section 131 of the Penal Code; Section 14 of the Anti-Pornography Act (31,34-36)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 5(d) of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 88 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act (34,37)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 52(2)(c) of the Defense Forces Act (38)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 5(b) of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (34)
Compulsory Education Age	No	13‡	Sections 2 and 10(3)(a) of the Education Act (22)
Free Public Education	No		Section 10(3)(a) of the Education Act (22)

* Country has no conscription (38)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (22)

During the reporting period, the Kampala Capital City Child Protection Ordinance was published. The ordinance prohibits the employment of children in hazardous work, including activities such as working in rock quarries and restaurants, collecting and selling scraps, and domestic work. (39) The ordinance has a maximum 6-month prison penalty for violators. (39) In addition, Wakiso District drafted a child protection ordinance that is currently awaiting publication in the Uganda Gazette, which is the final stage before its implementation can begin. (5)

Uganda's existing legal framework governing child labor does not meet international standards on a number of points. While Uganda has a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children under the age of 18, Section 8 of the Employment of Children Regulations permits a commissioner to allow children ages 12 and older enrolled in an educational training or apprenticeship program to engage in hazardous work, in violation of international standards. (33) Children in Uganda are required to attend school only up to age 13, making children ages 13 to 15 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school while also not being legally permitted to work. Finally, although Uganda has adopted policies to extend universal education through the secondary level, by law free education is limited to the primary level. (22,40)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD)	Formulates, implements, and enforces labor inspection policies and laws related to working conditions through its Department of Labor, Industrial Relations and Productivity. (41,42) Includes the Industrial Court, which judges labor dispute cases that are referred by labor officers and district labor officers. Operates the Uganda Child Helpline known as Sauti. (5,7,19)
Ministry of Internal Affairs	Enforces criminal laws on the worst forms of child labor. The Uganda Police Force's (UPF) Child and Family Protection Unit investigates forced labor cases, the Special Investigations Division and the Anti-Human Trafficking Desk investigate cases related to human trafficking and the use of children in illicit activities, and the Sexual Offenses Desk investigates commercial sexual exploitation. (19)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Prosecutes criminal cases related to the worst forms of child labor that are referred by UPF. (43)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Uganda took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the ability to assess penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$320,000 (10)	\$81,450 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	173 (10)	195 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (44)	No (44)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	542 (10)	283 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	56 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	0 (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (44)	Yes (44)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (5)

In 2022, the number of overall labor officers increased by 18; however, reports indicate that several districts still lack labor officers in general, and in districts with officers, the lack of funding often prevents them from carrying out their duties. Furthermore, although reports indicate that labor officer training is insufficient and that officers generally lack the expertise to follow through on child labor cases, during the reporting period, over 120 labor officers were trained to use a child labor inspection manual and on strategies to eliminate child labor. (5,10,11) From January to November 2022, the Uganda Child Helpline reported a total of 162 children engaged in child labor, including 107 found to be working as domestic workers. The helpline also reported an additional 144 child trafficking cases, including 55 children engaged in forced domestic work. (5)

Labor unions have noted that the number of inspections conducted is insufficient and that inspections are only carried out when complaints are received. (5,45) Labor inspectors in Uganda have the authority to inspect private farms and residences, but the MGLSD has noted that inspectors rarely exercise this authority despite the prevalence of child domestic work in the country. (11) Research indicates that Uganda does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (45-47) Given the lack of resources for inspections, local NGOs often train labor inspectors and even assist them in conducting child labor inspections. (5)

Uganda is signatory to ILO Convention 81 that requires labor inspection to be placed under the supervision and control of a central authority. (48,42) Research found, however, that coordination among the various agencies responsible for child labor law enforcement remains a challenge because labor officers are under district government authority, rather than under authority of the MGLSD. (49) For example, although under the Employment Act labor officers are required to submit monthly reports, in practice, the MGLSD does not receive labor reports from districts. (41) Research also found that child labor cases rarely reach the Industrial Court because of poor monitoring and the court's limited access to communities outside urban centers, where child labor is most likely to occur. (11) Overall, the government's enforcement of labor laws and penalization of violations was inadequate, particularly in the informal sector in which most children work. (50)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Uganda took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including official complicity in the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	1,286 (5,51)	532 (52)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	571 (51)	115 (5)
Number of Convictions	48 (51)	7 (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (10)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (5)

In 2022, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions reported that seven individuals were convicted of child trafficking for labor purposes. Three of these individuals received a 1-year prison term, another received a 2-year prison term, two others received a 7-year term, and another was fined approximately \$540. (5) In addition, the MGLSD reported withdrawing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating 493 children from the streets of Kampala back into their communities, in collaboration with the Kampala Capital City Authorities. (5) Observers reported that police officers and immigration officials, particularly at airports and border crossings, have been known to accept bribes to facilitate human trafficking, including child trafficking, or to warn human traffickers of impending operations or investigations. During the reporting period, the government investigated seven government officials—including police officers, military officers, and public officials—involved in potential human trafficking crimes; all seven cases remained ongoing at the end of the reporting year. (53) Law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations have claimed that immigration officials have been known to facilitate human trafficking, including the trafficking of children, while research has also found limited cases of police allegedly complicit in the commercial sexual exploitation of child refugees. (15,52) Reports have also indicated that high-level government officials may have owned or been associated with labor recruitment companies and networks of traffickers that engage in child trafficking. However, during the reporting period, the Uganda Police Force (UPF) Anti-Trafficking Department reported a reduction in the number of these cases due to an increase in prosecution-led investigations, which has also increased collaboration between police and prosecutors. (15,52,54) The involvement of government officials in human trafficking networks can significantly impede criminal investigations into cases of the worst forms of child labor. (15) Uganda's State House Anti-Corruption Unit, which works on human trafficking issues on an ad hoc basis, has initiated investigations related to official complicity in human trafficking but has not made any of these reports public. (55,56)

According to the government, police officers identify and refer street children to probation officers and civil society organizations to place children in homes and shelters and do not keep them in detention facilities; however, some children may have been housed in juvenile rehabilitation centers because shelters are frequently full. Police intermittently rounded up street children, housed them in children's homes and shelters for several days while social workers completed family tracing, and then returned them to their families. (5,50,56-58) Research found that some street children, including potential human trafficking victims and child laborers, have faced conflict with local authorities; however, in December 2022, the Constitutional Court declared the offenses of "rogues and vagabonds" in Uganda's Penal Code unconstitutional, and the UPF announced that it would no longer arrest individuals using these charges. (5,21,56,59) Reports have also indicated that investigators rarely follow up on reports of children involved in domestic work. When child domestic workers complain to their employers about not being paid, the employers may report the children to the police for theft, and police subsequently treat them as criminals rather than as victims who have not been paid for their work. (11)

Moreover, training of criminal investigators is insufficient, in part due to regular staff turnover and transfers. Some criminal law enforcement officials are not aware of key human trafficking laws, and some officers misclassify cases, conduct insufficient investigations, or encourage victims to accept payment from their traffickers to settle cases. (60,55)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labor	Coordinates child labor issues and implements the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor, including by setting policy priorities, securing resources for child labor programs, and coordinating with key stakeholders. Led by MGLSD, includes members from several ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Local Government, and UPF. (11,61) In 2022, held three meetings, approved a child labor inspection checklist, released the results of a 2021 baseline survey by Platform for Labor Action on child labor in rice- and sugarcane-growing areas in eastern Uganda, and participated in the May 2022 Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor in South Africa. (5)

During the reporting period, the National Child Well-Being Steering Committee established child well-being steering committees in 108 districts and in 1 city and established child well-being committees in 36 sub-counties. (5)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including inconsistent implementation of national policies throughout the country.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (2020/2021–2024/2025) †	Launched in 2021 and developed in alignment with the country's National Development Plan, aims to focus government efforts on prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reduction of the risk of child labor, with the goal of eliminating all forms of child labor by 2025. (62,63) In 2022, the government launched the ILO Social Finance Model to support implementation of the National Action Plan. (5)
National Child Policy	Seeks to coordinate the protection of child rights, focusing on abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. Includes prioritization of the elimination of child labor and was launched with an implementation strategy through 2025. (64,65) Seeks to outline the responsibilities of all stakeholders in implementing child-related policies and focuses on four basic children's rights: survival, development, protection, and participation. (64,65) During the reporting period, launched the National Child Focused Research Agenda (2022–2026), which supports and enables relevant research to support evidence-based programming. The research agenda was validated by the Interministerial Committee on the Implementation of the National Child Policy and includes research questions on child labor. (5)
National Action Plan for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Uganda (2019–2024)	Focuses on developing sustainable systems and structures to prevent human trafficking; improving capacity for the identification, protection of and support for victims; improving investigations and prosecutions; and establishing cooperative relationships with international stakeholders. Includes the National Referral Guidelines for Management of Victims of Trafficking, which seek to improve coordination among stakeholders responsible for providing services to victims and those responsible for prosecuting criminals. (66,67) The government continued to hold public awareness campaigns focusing on human trafficking in 2022, along with a variety of other activities to implement the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Uganda. (5)

† The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (68)

Despite the efforts to develop and implement a national action plan against child labor, because of the decentralized nature of inspections in Uganda, some districts have developed their own labor action plans that do not always reflect MGLSD priorities. (42)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Supply Chains 2018–2022 (ACCEL Africa)	Launched in 2018, and formally implemented by ILO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands in Uganda in 2020 in partnership with the Government of Uganda and the Federation of Ugandan Employers. The Uganda portion of the \$29 million, multi-country project targeted child labor in coffee and tea supply chains in the Mbale, Kabarole, Buikwe, Hoima, and Bushenyi districts. (13) In 2022, ILO supported implementation of key components of the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (NAP II), including the ongoing review of the National Child Labor Policy of 2006, supporting labor inspections in 56 workplaces, including in tea and coffee plantations and factories, reviewing guidelines for labor inspectors on child labor, training trainers for 25 labor officers, and conducting joint field monitoring of children in the ACCEL Africa Project target districts. (5)
Uganda Child Helpline (<i>Sauti</i>)†	Funded primarily by UNICEF with in-kind contributions from MGLSD, comprises District Action Centers and a physical call center located in Wakiso that screens all calls for reported cases of child abuse. Caseworkers at District Action Centers follow up directly on cases of child abuse, including child labor and exploitation, assigned to them by the National Call Center and liaise with local authorities to address reported incidents. (69) From January to November 2022, the helpline reported a total of 162 child labor cases, 107 of which were engaged in domestic work. In addition, it further reported 144 child trafficking cases, including 55 engaged in forced labor related to domestic work. (5)
Back Home Campaign for Karamoja Children‡	Government program that rescues Karamoja street children working in Kampala and places them in rehabilitation centers in Wakiso and Moroto districts before reuniting them with their families. (12,70) Remains inactive since it was stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (5)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Uganda.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (71,72)

Although Uganda has implemented programs that address child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in mining and commercial sexual exploitation. For example, the government lacks its own facilities to house child victims of labor exploitation or human trafficking and must instead rely on local community services organizations. (5,13) Furthermore, the MGLSD has noted that programs are concentrated in specific districts and thus do not cover child labor issues throughout the country. (5)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Uganda (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that only minors ages 16 and older who have received adequate, specific instruction or vocational training are permitted to perform hazardous work, and that their health, safety, and morals are fully protected.	2017 – 2022
	Increase the compulsory education age from 13 to 16 to match the minimum age for work.	2021 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2009 – 2022
Enforcement	Enhance the effectiveness of the inspectorate to enforce labor laws, including by establishing a mechanism to assess child labor violation penalties.	2017 – 2022
	Provide the labor inspectorate with sufficient funding and resources at the district level to ensure that inspectors are present in all districts and are able to carry out their duties.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that an adequate number of labor inspections are conducted and strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating routine and targeted inspections based on the analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2021 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that the inspectorate is using its existing authorities to inspect private farms and homes and to conduct sufficient routine and unannounced inspections, including in the informal sector.	2017 – 2022
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors from 195 to 275 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2009 – 2022
	Improve coordination between national- and district-level child labor enforcement bodies to ensure that relevant data are shared and that child labor inspections are prioritized across the country.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that child labor cases reach the Industrial Court and that penalties are assessed by addressing monitoring issues and improving the court's reach outside urban centers.	2019 – 2022
	Continue to increase efforts to ensure that public officials who facilitate or participate in human trafficking or the worst forms of child labor are held accountable, including officials who have ties with labor recruitment companies, and publish relevant reports.	2019 – 2022
	Strengthen mechanisms for following up on child labor claims and referring street children, including potential human trafficking victims, to social services providers, and prevent these children from being detained and abused by police.	2015 – 2022
	Increase the capacity of criminal law enforcement agencies to respond to the worst forms of child labor by dedicating more personnel to worst forms of child labor cases and improving training for criminal law enforcement staff.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that district labor action plans reflect the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development's priorities.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children by defraying informal costs borne by families, including supplies, uniforms, and materials; addressing physical and sexual violence; and ensuring sufficient teachers, infrastructure, and transportation in rural areas.	2012 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to ensure that refugee children have equal access to educational opportunities by addressing gender-based violence and exploitation, harassment, and refugee discrimination; accommodating the language needs of refugee students; and ensuring that there are well-equipped schools accessible to refugee settlements. Further ensure children have equal access to school regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure the availability of shelters for victims of child labor, including child trafficking victims.	2017 – 2022
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, particularly in mining and commercial sexual exploitation, in all areas of the country.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022

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In 2022, Ukraine made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Despite the ongoing aggression and territorial incursions made by Russia against Ukraine, the Ukrainian government passed several pieces of legislation to address child welfare, including child labor. Ukraine established a coordination body to support the temporary domestic and international evacuation of Ukrainian children living in various government institutions in areas affected by Russia's full-scale invasion. In addition, the government shared counter-trafficking information with refugees and displaced persons at border crossings and on social media to prevent child trafficking. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Ukraine is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to uphold Law No. 877-V of 2007, which restricts inspectors' ability to conduct unannounced labor inspections and delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Children in Ukraine face increased social, economic, and political challenges, which can make them more vulnerable to exploitation because of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine launched on February 24, 2022. The increased vulnerability is most pronounced in the country's Russia-occupied areas and areas of active conflict. Children in Ukraine are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in the production of pornography. Children, especially in Russia-occupied areas, also perform dangerous tasks in mining. Furthermore, Russia continues to forcibly separate Ukrainian children from their parents and, in some cases, illegally transfer them out of Ukraine to camps in Russia. It is impossible to monitor these camps or ensure that the children in them are not exploited now or in the future if they are not returned to their families in Ukraine. The government has not published labor and criminal law enforcement information regarding its efforts to address child labor. In addition, Ukrainian laws do not meet international standards for the prohibition of commercialized sexual exploitation because they do not criminalize the users of prostitution involving children.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ukraine.

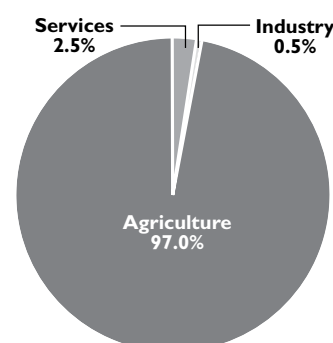
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	9.7 (385,204)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	12.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2014, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Child Labour Survey (NCLS), 2015. (2)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (3-7)
	Raising livestock, activities unknown (8)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown (3,4,9-11)
	Mining, [†] including loading, transporting, and sorting coal, and extracting amber (3,5,7,9,10,12)
Services	Street work, including distributing advertising leaflets, street trade, washing cars, and begging (3,4,6,9,13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,4,11,14)
	Use in the production of pornography (3,5,9-11,15)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (9,10,14)
	Forced begging (3,9-11,14,16)

[†] Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Commercial sexual exploitation remained a serious problem in Ukraine, and a significant amount of online child pornography continued to originate in the country. (17) Prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, children from Ukraine were trafficked both internationally and domestically for commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging. (9,11,13,16) Some state-run orphanages have also used children for illegal labor in business, seasonal agricultural work, construction, and sexual exploitation. (3,8,11) There was limited information about the types of work that children performed and the sectors in which they worked in Russia-occupied territory in the Donbas region and Russia-occupied Crimea; however, available data suggested that some children in these areas, in particular boys between the ages of 11 and 16, engaged in illegal coal mining in the Donbas region. (3,9) Russian occupying authorities and proxy groups backed by Russia continued to recruit children, train them in weapons use, and organize them into reserve militia battalions at militant-run camps and at school programs located in territory occupied or controlled by Russia. (3,9,10,18,19) In addition, Russian armed forces used 90 Ukrainian children as human shields in active conflict in Sumy, Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Zaporizhzhya regions. (20,21) Reports indicate that, in some cases, parents were coerced into giving consent for their children to attend so-called "summer camps" in Russia or Russia-occupied Crimea, in which the children were forcibly engaged in systematic ideological re-education and military training, and in some cases not permitted to return to their homes. (17,19,22)

Since the start of Russia's war on Ukraine, out of Ukraine's 7.5 million children, 4.8 million have been forced to flee, with 2 million having fled abroad and 2.8 million displaced internally. (23) Refugee and internally displaced children (particularly those who are unaccompanied) are especially vulnerable to exploitation in the worst forms of child labor. (24,25) In particular, children with disabilities, stateless children, children from Roma or other minority groups, children forcibly transferred to Russia, and homeless, orphaned, and poor children, especially those living in state-run institutions, run a bigger risk of falling victim to human trafficking and sexual and labor exploitation. (19,26,27) Education was disrupted for more than 5.7 million Ukrainian children as schools shut down as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. (19,20,23,27) National online education platforms were available to school-age children; however, access to these services was a challenge due to the lack of electricity and Internet as a result of Russia's deliberate targeting of civilian energy, electricity, and telecommunications infrastructure. (19,27,28) In addition, children had limited access to schooling due to security issues, non-functioning of in-person schooling, and damage to school infrastructure due to Russia's attacks on civilian infrastructure. (19,20,28,29) In Russia-occupied Crimea, education standards introduced by the Russian Federation have limited the rights of ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars to receive education in their native language. (17,19,30)

Birth registration of children born in Russia-occupied areas remains difficult, which can prevent them from receiving Ukrainian identity documents. (17,19,31,32) This, in turn, puts them at risk of statelessness. (31) Undocumented children, including those born since the start of Russia's war against Ukraine and who have not received their birth certificates, are especially vulnerable to being forcefully transferred to Russia and given




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Russian citizenship, and Russia's occupying authorities have forced Ukrainians in occupied territories to obtain Russian passports. (19,20) A law adopted in 2018 provides for any civil registry office to issue a Ukrainian birth registration on the basis of a birth certificate issued in Donetsk and Luhansk; however, fewer than half of the children born in these areas are estimated to have obtained a birth certificate issued by the Government of Ukraine. (32) Additionally, up to a third of children from some Roma communities also lack birth registration, impeding their access to education. (17,24)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Ukraine has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Ukraine's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 150 of the Criminal Code; Article 188 of the Labor Code; Article 21 of the Law on the Protection of Childhood (33-35)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Article 150 of the Criminal Code; Article 190 of the Labor Code; Article 21 of the Law on the Protection of Childhood (33-35)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 150-1 of the Criminal Code; Order of the Ministry of Health No. 46 on the approval of the list of heavy work and work with dangerous and harmful working conditions, in which the employment of minors is prohibited; Article 190 of the Labor Code (33,34,36)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 149, 172, and 173 of the Criminal Code; Article 43 of the Constitution of Ukraine; Article 1 of the Law on Employment (33,37,38)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 149 of the Criminal Code; Article 32 of the Law on the Protection of Childhood (33,35)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 149 and 301–303 of the Criminal Code; Articles 10 and 21 of the Law on the Protection of Childhood; Articles 1, 6, and 7 of the Law on the Protection of Public Morality (33,35,39)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 304 and 307 of the Criminal Code; Articles 10 and 21 of the Law on the Protection of Childhood (33,35)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Articles 15 and 20 of the Law on Military Duty and Military Service (40)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 15 of the Law on Military Duty and Military Service; Decree No. 447 on Measures to Enhance the Defense Capacity of the State (40,41)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 30 of the Law on the Protection of Childhood (35)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17‡	Articles 3, 12, and 20 of the Law on General Secondary Education; Article 53 of the Constitution (37,42)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 53 of the Constitution of Ukraine; Article 2 of the Law on General Secondary Education (37,42)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (42)

Because the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (33,35,42) Furthermore, the Ministry of Health Order No. 46 does not prohibit children between the ages of 14 and 16 from engaging in hazardous work as part of a vocational training program, which is not in compliance with international standards. Although the law specifies that children in these training programs may be onsite for no more than 4 hours and must remain in strict compliance with applicable safety norms and rules and regulations on labor protection, this is not in compliance with international standards. (36,43) Ukraine does not sufficiently prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children because no law criminalizes the users (clients) of prostitution involving children. (33)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, the absence of unannounced inspections conducted at the national level in Ukraine may impede the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
State Labor Service (SLS) within the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture	Enforces labor laws, including laws on child labor, by conducting inspections. (3,9,10) Regional offices of SLS share information about child labor cases with regional offices of the National Police of Ukraine, regional employment centers, the Department of Child Affairs, trade union leaders, regional social services organizations, and centers dedicated to social protection. (3,9) All new labor inspectors receive ILO-approved training upon hiring. (9) In 2022, the State Labor Inspectorate, supported by ILO, started an information awareness campaign at the Ukrainian railways addressed to refugees leaving Ukraine on the risks of human trafficking and labor exploitation, including child labor exploitation. (44)
Ministry of Internal Affairs	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, through the National Police and its Migration Police Department (MIPOL). (3,9,16) MIPOL identifies potential victims of human trafficking and conducts initial investigation before it transfers the cases to the National Police investigators. In April 2022, the National Police instructed the oblast and city leadership to discuss child trafficking prevention with the management of the new residential facilities for the evacuated children within Ukraine, and to ensure that all volunteers working with these children are vetted, as part of the government's efforts to combat child trafficking. (45) During the reporting period, the National Police created an information exchange platform on Ukrainian human trafficking cases with their European counterparts, and they also established an international Ukrainian Task Force to protect Ukrainians in Europe, including children, from human trafficking. In addition, MIPOL representatives attended several international training events on human trafficking prevention, to include prevention of the trafficking of Ukrainian refugee children. (45)
Office of the Prosecutor General	Investigates and prosecutes cases related to the worst forms of child labor. Oversees a department and regional offices for the Protection of Interests of Children and Combating Violence that focuses on the worst forms of child labor. (3) Ensures compliance with laws and regulations aimed at protecting minors by other government bodies investigating crimes against children. (3,9,46) The regional offices are responsible for conducting pre-trial investigations and investigations of criminal offenses, filing appeals of court decisions relating to children's issues, providing legal representation to children, and supporting the execution of court decisions in the sphere of child protection. (9,47) Established, with the assistance of UNICEF, specialized centers for child survivors and witnesses in Mykolayiv and Vinnytsya oblasts, with additional centers planned for Chernivtsi, Odesa, and Ternopil oblasts, as well as Kyiv. (16)

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Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Ukraine took actions to address child labor.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$16.9 million (9)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	772 (9)	Unknown
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (48)	Yes (48)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (9)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	16,008 (9)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	127 (9)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	127 (9)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	13 (9)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	No (49)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (9)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (48,50)	No (48,51)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Unknown

Government Order No. 303 (On the termination of measures of state supervision (control) under martial law) prohibited all labor inspections, and Law No. 2136-IX (On organization of labor relations under martial law) only allowed limited unannounced labor inspections on three specific grounds: (1) observance of wartime labor regulations, (2) informal employment, and (3) legality of employment contracts termination. (51,52) Moreover, the limited unannounced inspections are regulated by Law No. 877 of 2007 (Fundamental Principles of State Supervision and Monitoring of Economic Activity), which continues to restrict inspectors' ability to undertake inspections without giving employers prior notice, in addition to effectively limiting the frequency of allowed inspections. (48,53)

Although local inspectors are certified by the State Labor Service (SLS), their training may be inadequate and inconsistent with the training given to inspectors employed directly by the SLS. (13,54) In addition, the SLS is not authorized to compel payment of delinquent fines without a court proceeding, which can delay the collection of penalties. (3,10) Russia-occupied areas, including Crimea and parts of Kherson, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, Kharkiv, and Mykolayiv oblasts, are not under the control of Ukrainian authorities, who are prevented from carrying out inspections and law enforcement in these territories. (19,45)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Ukraine took actions to address child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (9)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	1,265 (9)	1,639† (49)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	802 (9)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Unknown

† Data are from January 2022 to November 2022.

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During the reporting period, research did not find updates on the criminal cases against 73 children for participation in Russia-led military formations in the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic," as well as against 1 child in the Russia-led forces in Crimea. In 2021, the National Police transferred 47 of these cases to courts for prosecution. (3,9,55) The National Police acknowledged instances of involvement of minors in illegal amber or coal extraction in Ukraine, but they provided no information on efforts taken to address this issue. (9)

In 2022, law enforcement authorities opened criminal proceedings on the involvement of 53 children in military activities. The status of these cases is unknown. (45) The Office of the Prosecutor General reported that from January to November 2022, there were: 53 violations of Article 149 of the Criminal Code (Trafficking in persons/ children), out of which 32 cases were sent to court; 2 violations of Article 150 (exploitation of children) and 3 crimes under Article 150-1 (engaging minors in begging), which resulted in 3 cases sent to court; 79 crimes for violation of Article 304 (engaging minors in criminal activity) which resulted in 69 cases sent to court; and 1,120 crimes for violation of Article 301-1 of the Criminal Code (Importing, producing, sale, or distribution of child pornography), with 937 cases sent to court. (19) In addition, the Migration Police Department (MIPOL) identified one boy and two girls as victims of child trafficking, and one boy and one girl as victims of forced labor, while the Ministry of Social Policy (MSP) identified two boys as victims of forced labor. (45) During the reporting period, Ukrainian authorities were engaged to bring back children who were unlawfully transferred or deported to Russia by Russia's forces. As of late December 2022, 125 children had been returned. (56,57) In addition, National Police investigators worked with authorities in Latvia and Lithuania in separate cases of child trafficking related to children from evacuated Ukrainian orphanages. (47)

In 2022, the government increased its human trafficking prevention efforts at national and local levels, to include sharing child counter-trafficking information at the border crossing points. The Ministry of Justice's local centers for secondary legal aid provided a legal education event on "Protection of Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation." (45) In addition, the ministry published 50 educational media articles on the prevention of human trafficking, including "On the Safety of Women and Girls Abroad." The government continued to operate a hotline and a website for potential victims of human trafficking, and during the reporting period has added a new number to accommodate calls from abroad. (45) The MSP, with a local NGO partner, developed an anti-trafficking awareness-raising campaign aimed at girls and young women, including girls between the ages of 12 and 18. In May 2022, government representatives participated in an OSCE roundtable entitled, "Strengthening Protection of Children from Violence, including Child Trafficking, during the Humanitarian Crisis in Ukraine." (45)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Inter-Ministerial Counter-Trafficking Coordination Council	Led by the Ministry of Social Policy (MSP), which serves as the National Coordinator for Counter-Trafficking Policy and includes more than 20 government entities and representatives from regional governments, NGOs, and international organizations. (11) During the reporting period, the body held online meetings, drafted Ukraine's State Strategy on Preventing Human Trafficking until 2025, and, with IOM's support, held a strategic planning session in June 2022, to adapt the Strategy to the war-time reality in the country. The Counter-trafficking Strategy is to be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for approval. (45)

In January 2022, the Government of Ukraine established the State Service of Ukraine for Children's Affairs to form and implement state policy for the adoption and protection of children's rights. (19,58) In August 2022, the

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government adopted and sent for the President’s approval a draft law to amend Ukrainian legislation at both the state and local levels, to improve the regulation of the activities of the State Service of Ukraine for Children’s Affairs, to strengthen the role of the local executive committees in the field of protection of children’s rights, and to strengthen the participation of the prosecutor’s office in ensuring the rights and interests of the child. (19,59)

In March 2022, the government established the Coordination Headquarters for the Protection of the Rights of the Child in Conditions of Martial Law to coordinate the temporary domestic and international evacuation of Ukrainian children living in various government institutions in areas affected by Russia’s war on Ukraine. (17,60,61) This body, together with the MSP, issued recommendations to foreign host countries on the protection of unaccompanied Ukrainian refugee children’s rights and interests while abroad. (45) In addition, the Ministry of Reintegration of Occupied Territories created an information portal called “Children of War,” through which Ukrainian citizens can report forced transfer of a child from Ukraine, forced change of citizenship, and other crimes committed against children by Russia’s army, including forced labor. (19,62) In 2022, the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights established a procedure for obtaining the status of human trafficking victims for Ukrainians, including children, who reside in the temporarily occupied territories and who were subjected to forced labor or forced to participate in military activities by Russia’s proxies or Russia’s forces. (63) Despite these efforts and although Ukraine has established the Inter-Ministerial Counter-Trafficking Coordination Council to coordinate efforts to address child trafficking, it does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor, including in mining and agriculture.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Resolution on the Social Protection of Children and Urgent Measures to Protect the Rights of the Child	Directs the government to develop additional programs and social services to protect children against abuse, including the worst forms of child labor. Includes a provision on measures that specifically address the participation of children in armed conflict. (10,64) Research was unable to determine whether actions were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
Ukraine’s National Strategy on Human Rights (2021–2023)	Focuses on 27 areas related to human rights, including children’s rights. (65) Research was unable to determine whether actions were taken to implement this strategy during the reporting period.

During the reported period, numerous oblast- and community-level programs included measures to address human trafficking, including in Chernihiv, Ternopil, Odesa, and Vinnytsya oblasts. (45) In addition, the government and the ILO, through the Decent Work Country Program in Ukraine (2020–2024), carried out humanitarian aid and job preservation activities. (66,67) However, although the Government of Ukraine has adopted the Resolution on the Social Protection of Children, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, including hazardous child labor in mining. (3,9,10)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Directorate for the Development of Social Services and Protection of Children's Rights†	Established under MSP in March 2020 to address the needs of vulnerable children. (68) Research was unable to determine whether the Directorate was active during the reporting period.
Centers and Shelters for Socio-Psychological Rehabilitation of Children†	Serve children in need, including child survivors of trafficking, through 72 centers, including 4 children's shelters. (45) Children are provided with individual assistance programs that involve social, psychological, pedagogical, medical, legal, and other types of assistance. (11,24) Government officials report that there is a lack of resources and specialized personnel to assist child survivors of sexual exploitation through these centers. (24) Centers and shelters were active during the reporting period. (45)
Centers for Social Services for Family, Youth, and Children†	In coordination with municipal authorities, provide social services for vulnerable children and families, including survivors of human trafficking. (69) As of July 2022, there were 84 social support institutions for families, children, and youth, and 17 centers for social support for children and families. Centers were active during the reporting period. (45)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Ukraine.

In 2022, many social service providers shifted efforts from direct victim assistance to IDP, to include human trafficking prevention efforts. During the reporting period, the government also increased the one-time payment to human trafficking survivors from 200 USD (7,443 UAH) to 218 USD (8,052 UAH). (45) However, although the Government of Ukraine has implemented programs to assist child survivors of human trafficking, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children in other forms of child labor, including hazardous work in mining.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Ukraine (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from 16 to 17 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Prohibit all children under age 16 from working in hazardous occupations during vocational training.	2011 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit and penalize the use of a child for prostitution, and the use, procuring, or offering of children in pornographic performances.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Strengthen the labor inspection system by removing restrictions on labor inspectors' authority to conduct unannounced onsite inspections, both proactively and in response to complaints.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors employed by regional governments receive adequate training that is consistent with that provided to labor inspectors employed by the State Labor Service.	2019 – 2022
	Authorize the State Labor Service to enforce the collection of delinquent penalties to ensure that all penalties imposed are collected.	2019 – 2022
	Publish labor and criminal law enforcement information.	2021 – 2022
	Hold perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor, including child soldiering, accountable. Ensure that former child soldiers are not penalized for crimes they were forced to commit.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to address all worst forms of child labor in all sectors, including in mining and agriculture.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Implement all policies addressing child labor, including the Resolution on the Social Protection of Children and Urgent Measures to Protect the Rights of the Child, and the Ukraine's National Strategy on Human Rights.	2019 – 2022
	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, including hazardous child labor in mining.	2018 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including the activities carried out by children working in mining, farming, raising animals, and construction, to inform policies and programs.	2019 – 2022
	Institute a rehabilitation and reintegration program for children engaged in armed conflict.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that all Ukrainian children, including those with special needs and those living in conflict zones, have access to education, whether virtual or in person, that meets their educational needs.	2020 – 2022

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Establish a procedure to implement the law empowering any civil registry office to issue a Ukrainian birth registration on the basis of a birth certificate issued in the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk.	2019 – 2022
	Develop programs to ensure that Roma children are registered at birth and are able to access education.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the mandates of the Directorate for the Development of Social Services and Protection of Children's Rights, and make information about implementation activities publicly available.	2022
	Allocate resources and trained personnel to assist with child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation in all state-run facilities that serve children in need.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that there are sufficient resources for the Centers for Social Services for Family, Youth, and Children to assist child survivors of human trafficking.	2013 – 2022
	Institute programs to address all forms of child labor, including hazardous work in mining.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Uzbekistan made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In October 2022, the Uzbek president signed a new labor code that places additional restrictions on work that can be performed by children. The government also issued a decree to reduce informal work and worked with the International Labor Organization to conduct a comprehensive survey of working conditions in the construction sector. In addition, it continued to run public awareness campaigns against child labor which targeted high risk sectors. The National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Forced Labor also adopted action plans to implement U.S. government recommendations on child labor and trafficking in persons. However, children in Uzbekistan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and public works. While the government has made strong progress in addressing labor issues in the cotton harvest, there continue to be impediments to the operation of non-governmental organizations in addressing broader labor concerns. Human rights and civil society organizations, including those working on forced and child labor issues, are frequently denied official registration for bureaucratic reasons, sometimes for failing to meet registration requirements that had not been publicly specified.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Uzbekistan. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	8.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	10.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		101.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2020–2021. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Raising silkworms, preparing land for crop planting (3-6)
Industry	Construction (3,7)
Services	Street work, including vending, portering, car washing, and begging (4,8-11)
	Collecting scrap metal (5,9)
	Public works, including refurbishing school grounds and facilities (5,7,8,12-14)
	Vending in markets (4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,7)
	Forced labor in construction, non-cotton agriculture, and cleaning parks, streets, and buildings (5,15)
	Illicit activities, including theft and the production or trafficking of drugs (8)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Although Uzbekistan has not carried out a national child labor survey to determine the prevalence of child labor in sectors other than cotton production, research indicates that children engage in child labor in agriculture. (8,12) Reports also indicate a high level of informal employment in Uzbekistan, which is difficult to monitor for violations of child labor laws. (3) Traffickers exploit Uzbek children in sex trafficking transnationally in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Asia. (7,15) Children are also vulnerable to internal human trafficking for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. (3,14,16)

Civil society observers note that rural poverty is a major contributing factor to child labor in Uzbekistan, and that poverty has slightly increased in recent years. Additionally, some schools in rural areas lack adequate facilities, including running water. (3,8,17) In 2021, Uzbekistan received a modest influx of refugees from Afghanistan. While all children in Uzbekistan are entitled to free compulsory education regardless of ethnicity or immigration status, most Afghan children do not attend school because they do not speak either Russian or Uzbek. (3) In addition, although there is free public education in Uzbekistan, schools may charge informal fees, which can make education inaccessible to children from low-income families. (8,11,12,18)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Uzbekistan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Uzbekistan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including clarifying light work permissible for children who have not yet completed schooling.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Articles 15, 77, and 242 of the Labor Code; Article 49 of the Administrative Code (19-21)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 241 and 245 of the Labor Code; Article 49-1 of the Administrative Code (20,21)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Decree on Adoption of the List of Occupations with Unfavorable Working Conditions to Which It Is Forbidden to Employ Persons Under Eighteen Years of Age; Decree on Approval of Provision on Requirements on Prohibition of Use of Minors' Labor (22,23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 37 of the Constitution; Article 7 of the Labor Code; Article 51 of the Administrative Code; Articles 135 and 148 of the Criminal Code (20,21,24,25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 3 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking; Article 135 of the Criminal Code (25,26)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 128, 128(1), 130, 131, and 135 of the Criminal Code (25)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 10 of the Law on Guarantees of the Rights of the Child; Articles 56 and 127 of the Criminal Code (25,27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 24 of the Law on Universal Military Service (28)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 4 and 46 of the Law on Universal Military Service (28)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 216(1) and 242 of the Criminal Code; Article 3 of the Law on Civil Organizations (25,29)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Articles 4 and 9 of the Law on Education (18)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 4 and 5 of the Law on Education; Article 41 of the Constitution (18,24)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (18)

In October 2022, the President signed a new Labor Code into law, which entered into effect on April 30, 2023. Article 412 of the amended labor code places further restrictions on work that may be performed by children under age 18, prohibiting them from performing underground work as well as work in nightclubs and in the production, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, narcotic and psychotropic substances, and toxic substances. (3,20) The updated labor code also codifies prohibitions against forced labor and aims to improve employment prospects for vulnerable populations, including survivors of human trafficking. (30)

The law does not determine the activities or conditions in which children who have not yet completed their compulsory schooling may engage in light work, although the Labor Code establishes caps on the maximum number of work hours permitted for children ages 15 to 17. (18,19)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction (MEPR)	Formerly the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, this ministry was renamed following a government reorganization in December 2022. (3) The MEPR retains oversight of labor issues, and conducts labor inspections through the State Labor Inspectorate (SLI), including inspections for compliance with child labor laws. (11) Leads the National Sub-Commission on Combating Forced Labor. (31,32) In addition to labor inspectors employed by the MEPR, local governments employ an additional 200 “assistant inspectors” who can participate in labor inspections but are not allowed to impose administrative fines. (14) Receives complaints, including on an anonymous basis, through a telephone hotline with a short, easy-to-remember number; a web portal; and a Telegram messenger bot. (3,33-37) In 2022, labor inspectors received 19,512 complaints of labor violations through all channels. (3)
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA)	Investigates crimes related to child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, which may then be prosecuted by the Prosecutor General’s Office. (3,11) Leads the National Sub-Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons. (31,32) Maintains a database of human trafficking crimes, including child trafficking crimes, which aggregates relevant information received from other government bodies, citizens’ organizations, non-profit organizations, and civil society groups. (14)
Prosecutor General's Office	Prosecutes criminal violations involving the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (11) Also provides oversight of some MOIA efforts to address the worst forms of child labor. (14)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction (MEPR) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the reluctance of inspectors to conduct unannounced inspections other than on the basis of a complaint.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$150,000 (8)	\$150,000 (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	344 (8)	344 (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (14,38)	Yes (3,38)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	6 (8)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	4 (8)	0 (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	4 (8)	0 (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (38)	Yes (38)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (3)

In December 2022, the President announced a government reorganization, effective January 1, 2023, in which the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations was renamed the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction and absorbed other responsibilities related to social welfare, which were previously under other ministries. The State Labor Inspectorate (SLI) conducted 6,912 inspections regarding working conditions in 2022 and 416,685 workplace inspections in total, but it is unclear how many of these were conducted onsite or targeted to high-risk sectors. (3,8) The government also worked with the ILO to undertake a comprehensive survey of working conditions in the construction sector, including the prevalence of forced and child labor. Although other sources indicate that children work in construction, the findings of this survey, published in November 2022, did not identify a systemic issue of child labor in the sector. (3,39) In May and June 2022, the government also facilitated a training course on interpersonal communication skills for 56 SLI inspectors with the goal of improving their interviewing skills and ability to detect labor violations. (3)

Research indicates that high turnover among labor inspectors is an ongoing problem in Uzbekistan. (3) The Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan (FTUU) employs an additional 33 inspectors who may conduct unannounced inspections, but they are not authorized to impose penalties. Labor inspectors are empowered to conduct self-initiated unannounced inspections in public-sector enterprises. (3) However, permission is required from the Business Ombudsman to conduct inspections at private-sector businesses, which poses an additional administrative burden and may prevent inspectors from addressing labor law violations in a timely manner. Reports indicate that in practice, inspectors may be reticent to enter private businesses or homes on an unannounced basis and typically only do so in response to complaints. (8,11,14,30,35,40,41) During the reporting period, a draft decree was presented to the President that is intended to address several of these gaps, including labor inspectorate funding and staffing, as well as to remove the requirement to obtain permission from the Business Ombudsman. However, this decree has not been signed. (3)

There have been no reports of a resurgence in child labor in the cotton harvest following the lifting of the Cotton Pledge and the removal of cotton from Uzbekistan from the U.S. Department of Labor's List of Goods Produced with Child Labor or Forced Labor in 2022. (3,42,43) The government distributed written materials to cotton pickers, employers, and *mahallas* about the prohibition on child labor. (3) Civil society activists report that

nearly all farmers they spoke to were aware of prohibitions on child labor in the cotton harvest. (42) In addition, the Agency for Youth Affairs monitors school attendance to ensure that students do not miss class during the cotton harvest and participates in monitoring efforts organized by the FTUU to monitor violations of labor laws during the annual cotton harvest. (8,10,44,45)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including in investigation planning.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Number of Investigations	9 (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	9 (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	9 (8)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (3)

Law enforcement information which clearly distinguishes data on criminal child labor cases from other criminal cases that involved children was not available for inclusion in this report. (3) However, in 2022, law enforcement investigated and filed five criminal cases related to the sexual exploitation of nine children. Two of these cases resulted in convictions during the reporting period, while the other three remained pending, and the children involved were referred to rehabilitation centers. (3) Authorities also investigated 368 criminal cases and obtained convictions in 339 cases of involving minors in antisocial behavior, which may include activities such as theft, robbery, hooliganism, or assault. (3) The government also reported investigating three individuals for trafficking of two children and initiating prosecutions against four individuals for previously identified cases of child trafficking, although it is unclear whether these children were trafficked for adoption purposes or labor. (30)

In September 2022, the government facilitated a 2-day training on forced labor for SLI inspectors and civil society members. The MEPR and the ILO also conducted an online training on forced labor which included representatives of farms and cotton and textile clusters. (3) During the reporting period, the MOIA academy graduated 124 cadets specializing in investigations who received 3 years of training, including on child and forced labor. In addition, the government cooperated with NGOs and international organizations including the IOM and the OSCE to conduct 17 trainings for new investigators throughout the year. (3)

Criminal liability for repeat forced labor offenses was introduced in early 2020 under Criminal Code Article 148(2). However, criminal enforcement agencies may face difficulties prosecuting criminal labor violations due to a lack of clarity over whether the perpetrator is a first-time offender, which would garner administrative penalties, or a repeat offender who may be prosecuted under criminal charges. (46)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including repeatedly denying the applications of human rights NGOs to officially register with the government.

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Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Forced Labor (National Commission)	Coordinates state and local entities' efforts to address sex trafficking and forced labor; analyzes and monitors efficacy of government programs to address sex trafficking and forced labor; organizes international cooperation on efforts to address sex trafficking and forced labor; and provides legal and policy recommendations for improvement of government efforts in these areas. (3,30-32) Chaired by the National Rapporteur on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Forced Labor. (3,31) Comprises two sub-commissions to address sex trafficking and forced labor, respectively. MOIA heads the Sub-Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons and the Minister of Labor heads the Sub-Commission on Combating Forced Labor. (8,12,31,32) In 2022, the Commission met three times and adopted action plans to implement recommendations from U.S. government reporting on child labor and trafficking in persons. The Commission was also responsible for approving a joint work plan with the ILO for 2022–2023, aimed at transitioning large sections of Uzbekistan's economy from informal to formal employment as a means of creating a better environment to monitor for child and forced labor violations. (3,30)

International organizations have reported that the Sub-Commission's lack of a designated secretariat hampered communication with external stakeholders, including NGOs and anti-trafficking activists, which delayed activities to counter human trafficking. (35) In addition, many human rights NGOs, including those working on forced and child labor issues, were repeatedly denied official registration, sometimes for failing to meet requirements that had not been publicly specified. These denials appear to be politically motivated and have the effect of curtailing civil society efforts to address human rights issues. (3,17,33,47,48)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the ILO and the Republic of Uzbekistan (2021–2025)	Establishes terms of agreement between the ILO and the government on cooperation to implement the Decent Work Country Program in Uzbekistan. (8,49) As part of this MOU, the ILO and the government approved a work plan during the reporting period to help transition large swaths of the country's workforce away from informal employment. (3)
Action Plans on Implementing International Recommendations to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Establish work plans to address international recommendations to advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Uzbekistan. Aim to improve labor and criminal law enforcement, coordination, policies, and social programs related to the worst forms of child labor. (50) In 2022, the government created an action plan specifically to implement the recommendations in this report, but did not provide a copy of the action plan nor specify what actions it intended to implement. (30)

In addition to the joint work plan the government signed with the ILO, the President issued a decree to decrease informal employment as a means to reduce child labor and forced labor. (3)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Efforts to Prevent Child and Forced Labor in the Cotton Harvest†	Includes initiatives to raise awareness about the prohibition of child and forced labor in the cotton harvest. In 2022, the government distributed 800 banners and 200,000 flyers on prohibitions against the use of child labor in the cotton harvest, and provided 10,000 posters on forced and child labor prohibitions to <i>mahallas</i> and employers. (30)
National Rehabilitation Center†	MEPR-operated shelter that provides human trafficking survivors with emergency medical and social services and assists in social rehabilitation. (9,12) Children are placed in specialized institutions, separate from adult survivors. (30) This center continued to provide services to survivors of the worst forms of child labor in 2022. (3)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Uzbekistan.

Although there are programs to address child labor in the cotton sector, research did not find evidence of programs designed to address child labor in other sectors, such as public works, street work, and agriculture other than cotton.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Uzbekistan (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the labor law's light work provisions specify the activities and conditions in which children who have not yet completed their compulsory schooling may work.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Provide more detailed information on labor inspections, including the number of unannounced inspections, how many inspections are conducted onsite versus through desk inspections of documents submitted by businesses, and whether inspectors are targeting high-risk sectors.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors conduct self-initiated unannounced inspections in all sectors, including at private enterprises, even if no complaint has been filed.	2018 – 2022
	Sign draft documentation which will address gaps with the funding and staffing of the labor inspectorate, as well as remove the requirement for the Business Ombudsman to approve inspections of private sector enterprises.	2022
	Thoroughly investigate all potential criminal cases involving the worst forms of child labor and, when sufficient evidence exists, refer violations for prosecution.	2020 – 2022
	Remove barriers to investigating and prosecuting officials who may be complicit in child labor violations, including simplifying regulations which may penalize violations differently depending on whether the violator is a repeat offender.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Designate standard mechanisms for communication between external stakeholders and national coordinating bodies to facilitate coordination of efforts to address forced labor and human trafficking.	2020 – 2022
	Remove obstacles to the registration of NGOs monitoring child labor, forced labor, and other labor rights issues, including making all registration requirements public.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure educational access for children who do not speak Uzbek or Russian.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that schools do not charge informal fees to students or their families.	2019 – 2022
	Implement targeted programs to address the worst forms of child labor in public works, street works, and agriculture sectors other than cotton harvesting.	2009 – 2022

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In 2022, Vanuatu made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund to launch several child protection programs. This included establishing a free 24/7 child helpline to connect callers with trained child protection offices to report concerns. Additionally, the National Child Protection Referral Pathway guidance document was released, which outlined the roles for different stakeholders and service providers to support children, including psychosocial support. Lastly, the government streamlined the issuance of national identification cards for children. Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Vanuatu are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in forestry and logging. Vanuatu's minimum age for hazardous work, 15, is below the international standard of age 18. Vanuatu also lacks a referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services providers.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Vanuatu. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		101.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Forestry, including logging (3,4)
Services	Street vending, including selling newspapers (3,5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced domestic work (4) Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,6,7)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Vanuatu lacks data to determine the nature and prevalence of child labor in the country, including in forestry and logging. (5,8,9) However, children are often seen selling newspapers on the street, but the government does not consider this to be an activity that should be regulated. (3) Furthermore, children living in remote areas face difficulties accessing education, increasing the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (10) In 2022, the Government of Vanuatu, in partnership with UNICEF, conducted a national survey on the state of inclusive education. (11) The survey found that there is no budget allocated to support inclusive education, and that almost all schools lack sanitation and menstrual hygiene management facilities that are accessible and safe for all. (11,12) Vanuatu's Education School Fee Grant Program has been implemented by the government with the

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goal of reducing the financial burden parents face when sending their children to school. (13) This has led to an increase in enrollment, but has also created the need for improved infrastructure and teacher training. (3) Although this effort has been made, approximately 50 percent of children still drop out of the education system due to inadequate programs and facilities and limited capacity of schools to accommodate all children. (3)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Vanuatu has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Vanuatu's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to criminalize the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 38 and 39 of the Employment Act (14)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	15	Section 40 of the Employment Act (14)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Section 40 of the Employment Act (14)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 7 and 78(2) of the Employment Act; Section 102 of the Penal Code; Sections 2, 34, and 35 of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act (14-16)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 35 of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act (15)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 101B–D of the Penal Code; Section 2 and 35 of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act (15,16)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Section 35 of the Penal Code (16)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

† Country has no standing military (17)

Vanuatu's existing legal framework governing child labor does not meet international standards on a number of fronts. Vanuatu's hazardous work prohibitions do not comply with international standards that require all children under age 18 to be protected from work that could jeopardize their health and safety. Furthermore, Vanuatu has yet to determine by law the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (14, 18, 19) In addition, the Employment Act permits children under the age of 12 to perform light work in agricultural undertakings owned and managed by their own families, without requiring that the undertaking not have other employees and be for local consumption only; the Employment Act also permits children ages 12 and 13 to work in light agricultural work and domestic work, but it does not specify the activities or hours per week that are allowed. (14) In addition, the Penal Code does not include heightened penalties for inducing children to engage in illicit activities, including in drug production and drug trafficking. (16)

Vanuatu also lacks a compulsory education policy, increasing the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (7, 18) However, although Vanuatu does not have free public education, the School Grant Program provides all schools with a grant of up \$75 (VT9,000) per student. Additionally, Secondary School Tuition Fee Subsidies of \$355 (VT42,000) are paid to the school to support students in grades 7 through 10. (13)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Department of Labor	Enforces provisions set forth in the Employment Act, including child labor laws. (8, 20)
Vanuatu Police Force	Enforces all criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor and collaborates with the Vanuatu Tourism Office to address commercial sexual exploitation of children. Prosecutes child labor cases. (3, 7)
National Intelligence Unit	Operates under the Vanuatu Police Force. Is the designated lead and enforces Vanuatu's trafficking in persons laws, including possible commercial sexual exploitation of children as a result of human trafficking. (4)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Vanuatu took actions to address child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (14)	Yes (14)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (14)	Yes (14)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Unknown (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)

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The Government of Vanuatu did not respond to requests for information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. However, research indicates that the Child Desk, under the Ministry of Justice and Community Services, does not have adequate financial and human resources to develop and integrate child protection policies into national planning initiatives. (8,9) Although the number of labor inspectors is unknown, research indicates that Vanuatu does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,21)

Vanuatu does not have a formal mechanism for reporting and responding to children who need protection. (3) Most cases of child labor in the country are dealt with by *Kastom* (an informal method individuals use to settle disputes), and although anyone can report a crime, research found that police are more likely to investigate if the victims themselves report their allegations. After a case is reported by the victim, the police are mandated to investigate the allegations and bring evidence to the public prosecutor for trial. (3,22) Although *Kastom* is a common mechanism used to address child protection issues, research has found no established interagency protocols and procedures between *Kastom* and governmental offices—including the Vanuatu Police Force—to sufficiently coordinate and ensure that child protection services are provided. (5,8,20)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Vanuatu took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (8)	Unknown (3)

The Government of Vanuatu did not respond to requests for information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. However, research found that the Vanuatu Police Force enforced criminal laws against child labor and human trafficking, while the Vanuatu Tourism Office, Police Force, and Department of Labor dealt with matters of commercial sexual exploitation. (3) The Police Force, Tourism Office, and Department of Labor fall under different government ministries, and interagency coordination on human trafficking investigations between law enforcement agencies was primarily ad hoc. (3,23) Although the police have established standard operating procedures to attend to child victims, there is no formal referral mechanism between the police and social services. (3,5,20) Reporting shows that inspectors in Vanuatu do not receive anti-human trafficking trainings, and due to a lack of dedicated funds and training on the country's anti-trafficking policy, trafficking investigations are constrained. (4,22)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Child Protection Working Group	Serves as the primary forum for exchanging information on child protection and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Chaired by the Director General of the Ministry of Justice and Community Services, and comprises representatives from the government, UN agencies, civil society organizations, and NGOs. (20,24-26) According to its Terms of Reference, it has a role in capacity building, systems strengthening, emergency preparedness and response, and coordination of services across all child protection sectors. (8,9) Additionally, although the government has established the National Child Protection Working Group, there have been no indications of any initiatives or activities to implement policies to prevent and eliminate child labor. (3)

In 2022, the National Child Protection Referral Pathway guidance document was released, which outlines the roles of different stakeholders and service providers for support provided to children, such as psychosocial support, access to healthcare, and access to safety and justice. (27)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of the National Children Protection Policy.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Protection Policy (2016–2026)	Aims to protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Provides children with equitable access to services supporting reintegration and recovery when needed. (3,7,25) However, the lack of a dedicated budget as well as staffing and funding issues in the offices responsible for implementation are major challenges to the effectiveness of the policy. (3,5) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Aimed to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific through a multinational framework comprising 14 South Pacific Nations. Included in their priorities were the elimination of child labor, and the worst forms of child labor. (28) Research was also unable to determine what actions were taken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy during the reporting period.

There is no register of civil society organizations tasked with protecting children, and social services providers are not required to be registered with the state. Furthermore, there are no standards or requirements that child protection agents or social services providers must follow when addressing children's issues. (5,8,25)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Education School Fee Grant†	Funded by the Government of Vanuatu's Ministry of Education; provides funding directly to schools. The funds support students of all grade levels, including students in Years 1 through 6, to offset education costs. (13) The grant program was active in 2022 with funds being disbursed to schools in three installments throughout the year. These grant amounts ranged from \$69 to \$76 per student, depending on their grade level. (13) Research was unable to determine whether the Vanuatu Education School Fee Grant program included child labor elimination policies or efforts.
Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (2021–2030)	A strategic plan to strengthen the education sector in Vanuatu, including the education budget and monitoring of expenses. (29) Provides access to education to all children in Vanuatu. Implements quality infrastructure based on needs. (29) Reduces the number of out-of-school children and identifies children studying at the incorrect grade level. (29) The strategic plan was active during 2022. (30)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Vanuatu.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (27)

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In July, 2022, Vanuatu's Ministry of Justice and Community Services, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and UNICEF partnered to launch an array of new child protection initiatives, one of which was the creation and issuance of children's national identification cards. (27) Vanuatu's Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Internal Affairs have stated the objective of the initiative is to provide legal recognition of children's identity which will help protect them from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. (27) Children can now apply for the new national identification cards in the national capital, Port Vila, or at registration offices in all provinces. (31) During the reporting period, the government also established the free Child (*Pikinini*) Helpline, allowing anyone to report concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child by calling 163. The helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is staffed by trained child protection officers. (27) However, during the reporting period, the government of Vanuatu did not implement any social programs that directly addressed preventing or eliminating child labor.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Vanuatu (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for hazardous work from 15 to 18, to comply with international standards.	2016 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law protects children ages 12 and 13 employed in light agricultural work by specifying the activities and hours per week that are allowed.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law includes heightened penalties for the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law an age up to which education is compulsory that extends to the minimum age for work.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law provision of free basic public education.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of labor inspectors, labor inspectorate funding, the number and type of labor inspections conducted, violations found, and penalties imposed and collected.	2012 – 2022
	Employ at least 3 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 108,000 people.	2021 – 2022
	Train labor inspectors and criminal investigators on anti-human trafficking and enforcement of child labor laws and make the results of these efforts public.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information on the number of criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of investigations conducted, violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions made, and penalties imposed.	2012 – 2022
	Strengthen coordination and sufficiently fund referral mechanisms between the Department of Labor, the Vanuatu Police Force, the Vanuatu Tourism office, and social welfare services to protect and rehabilitate children involved in child labor, including its worst forms.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the Child Desk has adequate financial and human resources to develop and integrate national planning initiatives for child protection policies.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that all complaints of child labor are investigated, regardless of who lodges the complaint.	2019 – 2022
	Establish interagency protocols and a referral and coordination mechanism between <i>Kastom</i> and government child protection services.	2018 – 2022
	Establish formal interagency coordination on human trafficking investigations between law enforcement agencies, including the Police Force, Tourism Office, and Department of Labor.	2022
	Coordination	Ensure that the National Child Protection Working Group takes meaningful action to implement policies to prevent and eliminate child labor.

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and publish results from activities implement during the reporting period.	2022
	Ensure that all policies are allocated funding and implemented as intended to address all relevant worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that social services providers and civil society organizations are registered and follow a standard set of procedures in providing care to vulnerable children.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information regarding actions undertaken to implement the National Child Protection Policy.	2022
	Publish information regarding actions undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy.	2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs, including in forestry logging, and street vending, such as selling newspapers.	2014 – 2022
	Increase access to education for all children, including by funding inclusive education, increasing access for remote students, improving facilities to accommodate all children, improving infrastructure, particularly in sanitation, and expanding teacher training.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that the Education School Fee Grant is sufficiently funded and contains child labor elimination policies or efforts.	2018 – 2022
	Implement and support social programs that directly address preventing and eliminating child labor.	2022

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For the 2022 reporting period, no assessment has been made regarding Wallis and Futuna's efforts to advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor because there is no evidence of a worst forms of child labor problem and the French collectivity has an adequate legal and enforcement framework on child labor.




I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that child labor exists in Wallis and Futuna. (1) Wallis and Futuna has a population of approximately 15,929 inhabitants. (11)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Wallis and Futuna is a French overseas collectivity, and, as such, cannot ratify international conventions. However, France's ratification of such conventions applies to Wallis and Futuna. (2,3) France has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 1).

Table 1. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

Given its status as an overseas collectivity of France, French law is applicable in Wallis and Futuna. (2,3) The Government of France has established laws and regulations related to child labor, which are in line with relevant international standards (Table 2).

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 118 of the Labor Code of Wallis and Futuna (4)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 115 of the Labor Code of Wallis and Futuna (4)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles L.4153-8, L.4153-9, and D.4153-15 of the Labor Code; Decree No. 2013-915, Relative to Work That is Prohibited and Regulated for Young People Less Than 18 Years (5,6)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 212-1, 224-1 A, B, and C, 225-4-1, 225-14-1, 225-14-2, and 711-1 of the Penal Code; Article 2 of the Labor Code of Wallis and Futuna (4,7)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 225-4-1 to 225-4-9 and 711-1 of the Penal Code (7)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 225-5 to 12, 225-12-1, 225-12-2, 227-22, 227-23, and 711-1 of the Penal Code; Article 15 of Law No. 2021-478 (7,8)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 222-34, 222-35, 227-15 to 227-28-3, and 711-1 of the Penal Code (7)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		

Wallis and Futuna

NO ASSESSMENT

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 461-7 of the Penal Code (7)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles L131-1 and L161-1 of the Education Code of France (9)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles L132-1, L132-2, and L161-1 of the Education Code of France (9)

* Country has no conscription (10)

† Country has no standing military (11)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, Wallis and Futuna has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Service of Labor and Social Laws Inspectorate	Enforces the French labor code within Wallis and Futuna, falling under the joint authority of the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Overseas Territories. (1,12) There is one labor inspector in Wallis and Futuna, and they are trained on child labor laws. (1)
The French Gendarmerie Nationale	Enforces legislation banning child labor. (1,12)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, there are no actions needed to advance the continued prevention of child labor in Wallis and Futuna.

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West Bank and the Gaza Strip

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, the Palestinian Authority made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in the areas of the West Bank under its control. In 2022, the labor inspectorate detected 360 more violations of child labor laws than in 2021 and courts achieved 9 convictions for child labor crimes. However, children in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation. Children also perform dangerous tasks in construction and fishing. The Palestinian Authority's legal framework does not establish child trafficking or forced labor as a criminal offense in accordance with international standards. Labor investigators also reported that they cannot inspect worksites at night, when they suspect child labor occurs, because of insufficient funding for overtime. In addition, social programs to prevent or eliminate child labor are insufficient.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		101.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2022. (2)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Cultivating fruits and vegetables,† including dates, olives, onions, sweet peppers, and tomatoes (3-7)
	Fishing,† including working on fishing boats and repairing nets (3)
Industry	Construction,† including demolishing buildings and collecting rubble and gravel for construction purposes (3,5,6)
	Manufacturing, activities unknown (4)
	Working in factories (3)
	Mining and quarrying† (4,8)
Services	Street vending, portering, and cleaning cars (3,5,9)
	Begging (3,5)
	Working in auto shops (3)
	Working in shops, hotels, restaurants, and bakeries (3,4,6)
	Domestic work (3)
	Transporting goods (3)
	Collecting scrap metal, cement bricks, and solid waste† (3)
	Scavenging garbage and gravel at trash pits (6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Recruitment in non-state armed forces (9)
	Forced recruitment in state armed forces (9)
	Commercial sexual exploitation (10)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Children may be vulnerable to child labor in the agricultural sector, partly because the Palestinian Authority (PA) does not have jurisdiction or the resources to enforce laws in Area C's agricultural fields and Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which are administered by Israel. (7, 11) Some Palestinian girls from the West Bank are

West Bank and the Gaza Strip

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT




vulnerable to being exploited for sex and labor the West Bank and in Israel after family members force them into marriages with older men; these girls experience physical and sexual abuse, threats of violence, and restricted movement. (10)

Overcrowded classrooms, violence in schools, damaged schools, and disruption due to weather contribute to some children dropping out. (3,6) In the West Bank, long distances to schools, school closures, Israeli demolition and confiscation of schools, and attacks by settlers and harassment and detention by Israeli security forces at checkpoints prevent some children from attending school. (12,13)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The PA has Non-Member Observer status at the UN. In April 2014, PA officials presented to UN officials letters of accession to 15 UN treaties, including the UN CRC and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. In December 2017, PA officials acceded to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	N/A
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The penal code applicable to the West Bank is Jordanian Law No. 16 of 1960 (Jordanian Penal Code for the West Bank). The penal code applicable to Gaza is Penal Code No. 74 of 1936, which was enacted during the British Mandate (Penal Code for Gaza). (14) The PA has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the failure to criminalize child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 3 and 93 of the Labor Law for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (15)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 95 of the Labor Law for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; Article 14 of the Palestinian Child Law for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (15,16)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of Minister of Labor's Decree on Hazardous Work for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (17)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 1 of Minister of Labor's Decree on Hazardous Work for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (17)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 1 of Minister of Labor's Decree on Hazardous Work for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 306 and 310 of the Jordanian Penal Code for the West Bank; Articles 167 and 172(5) of the Penal Code for the Gaza Strip (18,19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 27 and 44 of the Palestinian Child Law for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; Article 389 of the Jordanian Penal Code for the West Bank; Article 193 of the Penal Code for the Gaza Strip (16,18,19)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes†	18	Article 46 of the Palestinian Child Law for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (16)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 46 of the Palestinian Child Law for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (16)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 3 and 18 of the Palestinian Education Act for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; Article 37 of the Palestinian Child Law for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (16,20)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 3 and 15 of the Palestinian Education Act for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (20)

* No conscription in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (21)

† No standing military in the West Bank (13)

As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. The Labor Law's minimum age provision does not apply to minors who work for their first-degree relatives, which is not in line with international standards that limit the exception for family-based work to small-scale holdings producing for local consumption and not regularly employing hired workers. (15) The law also does not establish child trafficking or forced labor as a criminal offense in accordance with international standards. (15,17) In addition, laws criminalizing commercial sexual exploitation of children are insufficient because they do not criminalize the use, procuring, and offering of all male and female children for prostitution, the production of pornography, or pornographic performances. (16,18,19) Further, there are no criminal penalties for recruiting children into non-state armed groups. (16)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The PA has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor (MOL), General Administration of Labor Inspection and Protection	Enforces labor laws, including those related to child labor. (5)
Police Bureau for the Protection of the Family and Adolescents	Investigates violations of laws, including the commercial sexual exploitation and economic exploitation of children. Coordinates with the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) to monitor cases of child labor and economic exploitation. (5)
Office of the Public Prosecutor for Children	Investigates and prosecutes cases of child exploitation, including child labor. (5)

In the West Bank, under the terms of the Oslo-era agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli Government, the PA has civil law jurisdiction in the areas of the West Bank designated Area A and Area B, which represent approximately 39 percent of the West Bank's land area and contain approximately 94 percent of the Palestinian population. The Israeli Government has full administrative and security control over the city of Jerusalem and Area C; the latter represents 61 percent of the West Bank's land area and approximately 6 percent of the Palestinian population and the vast majority of the West Bank's agricultural areas. (22,23) Although PA laws in the Gaza Strip, along with Egyptian, British Mandatory, and Ottoman statutes, and *shari'a* law, Hamas continues to exercise *de facto* control over security and other matters. (22-24)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in the West Bank took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the insufficient allocation of resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (13)	Unknown (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	79 (13)	80 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (13)	Yes (9)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (13)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	11,226 (13)	14,041 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	51 (13)	411 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	19 (13)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (13)	Unknown (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (13)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (13)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (13)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (13)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (13)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (13)	Yes (9)

Labor investigators have reported that they cannot inspect worksites at night, when they suspect child labor occurs, because of insufficient funding for overtime. (9) Moreover, inspectors are unable to inspect family-owned business, which make up a majority of business in the West Bank. While the PA has a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations through courts, the majority of cases are resolved when an employer terminates the employment of the child before the court takes up the case. (9)

The PA did not provide information on labor inspectorate funding, the number of penalties imposed, or the number of penalties collected.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in the West Bank took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (13)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (13)	211 (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (13)	9 (9)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (13)	9 (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (13)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (13)

Insufficient resources, including investigators' lack of access to vehicles, hamper the PA's capacity to enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (13)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The PA has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of a coordinating mechanism that covers all aspects of child labor.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Ministry of Social Development Child Protection Network	Monitors cases of child labor, ensuring that the MOL's services are provided to withdraw children from child labor. Includes eight technical committees throughout the West Bank that provide psychological and social support to children and caregivers. (5) Coordinates with the Ministry of Education on cases of school dropouts and child labor. Works with the MOSD's 13 Youth Social Rehabilitation Centers to provide children who have dropped out of school with social, education, vocational, and cultural training. (5) Comprising MOSD, MOL, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, and other Palestinian Authority (PA) and non-governmental organizations. (25) Active in 2022. (9)

Although the MOSD Child Protection Network exists, research found no evidence that the committee functions as a coordinating mechanism to address all aspects of child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government has established policies to address child labor.

The PA's National Policy Agenda (2017–2022) aimed to alleviate poverty through social programs for vulnerable groups and job creation programs for women and youth, improve primary and secondary school curricula, ensure equal access to education for marginalized areas, and ensure that technical and vocational training is aligned with labor market needs. (26) However, child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy as distinct issues. Further, research found no evidence of any other policies to address child labor in construction, street work, and agriculture.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the PA funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 9). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 9. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
MOL's Vocational Centers†	PA program in the West Bank, consisting of 13 employment offices and 9 vocational centers operated by MOL, for children over the age of 15 to enroll in vocational training courses. MOL also provides financial assistance to families, ensuring that children return to school and no longer engage in child labor. (5)
UN Education Programs	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East programs that provide educational support for children and youth in refugee camps, and microfinance and other forms of support to families in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. (27) Active in 2022. (28)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Palestinian Authority.

Although there are programs in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in construction, street work, and agriculture.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Table 10).

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Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work from age 15 to age 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits child trafficking, including both domestic and international human trafficking, in accordance with international standards.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, or excepts only those working in family and small-scale holdings producing for local consumption and not regularly employing hired workers.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery and practices similar to slavery, including debt bondage and forced or compulsory labor.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the use, procurement, and offering of children for all forms of commercial sexual exploitation are criminally prohibited.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that child labor laws are enforced in the Gaza Strip.	2010 – 2022
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including labor inspectorate funding and the number of violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2010 – 2022
	Provide further resources and staff, including budget for overtime hours and vehicles, to the Ministry of Labor to conduct labor inspections and criminal investigations in all sectors, including family-owned businesses and at night.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that penalties against those who use child labor in contravention of Palestinian Authority laws are levied even if the employer terminates the employment of a child.	2022
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to prevent and eliminate child labor.	2022
Government Policies	Adopt policies to address child labor in construction, street work, and agriculture.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Expand programs to improve access to education; for example, ensure that children are not subjected to violence, schools are weatherproof, and delays at checkpoints do not prevent children from attending school.	2011 – 2022
	Expand programs to further address child labor, specifically in construction, street work, and agriculture.	2010 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2020 – 2022

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In 2022, Morocco made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Kingdom of Morocco claims the territory of Western Sahara and administers the area that it controls with the same constitution, laws, and structures as in internationally recognized Morocco, including laws that deal with child labor. During the reporting period, the Moroccan government drafted a national strategy against human trafficking and developed a guide to help government ministries identify trafficking victims. However, children in Western Sahara are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. Additionally, the Labor Code's minimum age for work provisions do not meet international standards as children 15 years of age and under are not protected when working in traditional artisan and handicraft sectors. Furthermore, the scope of government social programs is insufficient as they do not fully address children exploited through domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.




I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Western Sahara are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. (1,2) Children, particularly in rural areas, are vulnerable to child labor due to educational barriers similar to those faced in other locations in Morocco, such as insufficient facilities, lack of reliable and safe transportation, and unqualified teachers. (2,3) Data on key indicators on children's work and education are not available from the sources used in this report.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Western Sahara is subject to the same laws as internationally recognized Morocco. (4) Morocco has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor, which the government extends to the areas in Western Sahara that it controls (Table 1).

Table 1. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The Government of Morocco has established laws and regulations related to child labor that extend to Western Sahara (Table 2). However, gaps exist in Morocco's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a minimum age for work that does not meet international standards.

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Articles 4, 143, and 151 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Law No. 19-12 (5,6)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 147 and 181 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Law No. 19-12 (5,6)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Child Labor List, Decree No. 2-10-183; Articles 179 and 181 of the Labor Code (5,7)

Western Sahara

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Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 448.1, 448.4, and 448.5 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings; Article 10 and 12 of the Labor Code; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code (5,8,9)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 497, 498, 499, and 503-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (8,9)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 497, 498, 499, and 503-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (8,9)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Law number 1-73-282; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (8-10)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 4 of Law No. 44-18 (11)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (9)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 1 of Law No. 04-00 (12)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 1 of Law No. 04-00 (12)

The 2016 Law on Setting Up Employment Conditions of Domestic Workers prohibits employing children under the age of 18 in domestic work; this provision will take effect in October 2023. However, the Labor Code does not apply to children who work in the traditional artisan or handicraft sectors for family businesses with five or fewer employees. (3,5)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The Government of Morocco has established relevant institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including Western Sahara (Table 3).

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills (MEIPEEC)	Enforces child labor laws with its 54 inspection offices throughout the country. (2,3) Partners with civil society organizations working to remove children from child labor and provides them with an education or vocational training. (2,13) MEIPEEC's priorities in the 2022 National Labor Inspection Plan include upholding workers' representation rights and focusing inspections on temporary work agencies, security, gardening, construction, and cleaning companies. (2)
Ministry of the Interior	Enforces prohibitions on trafficking in persons, prostitution, and other exploitative crimes involving minors, as established in the Penal Code, through the General Directorate of National Security. (2)
General Prosecutor	Prosecutes criminal offenses against children, and processes cases involving children in the court system. Serves independently as a judiciary body separate from the Ministry of Justice. (2)

Information concerning labor enforcement for Western Sahara is not tracked separately from the entirety of Morocco, so the following information refers to Morocco as a whole. Between January 2022 and February 2023, 522 children were removed from hazardous working conditions, with 332 of these children being younger than 15 years of age. (2) The National Observatory for Children's Rights also established an online portal and reporting mechanisms on its website to provide more ways to report child abuse, including child labor. This complements the hotline already in use for formal child labor complaints. (14) Additionally in 2022, the government increased the number of labor inspectors by over 23 percent, from 404 to 500 in total. (2,3) Of the 500 labor inspectors in Morocco, 101 are contractors rather than public servants. (2) Due to the instability of contract employment, the authority and training of these labor inspectors may be called into question.

Despite this increase in inspectors, research indicates Morocco does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (15-17) Penalties for employing children in hazardous work are also insufficient to deter child labor, as labor inspectors generally recommend to employers to remove children from work before imposing any penalties and may not impose penalties if the employer ends the employment of children. (4,18,19)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

Table 4. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission for the Coordination of Measures to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates the government's efforts to address trafficking in persons. Led by the Ministry of Justice, with 22 members representing various ministries and civil society organizations. (2,14,20) In 2022, the Commission completed a guide for human trafficking indicators to help government ministries identify trafficking victims and organized a workshop on establishing strong national referral mechanisms for trafficking victims. (21) In March 2023, the Commission also enacted a new trafficking strategic plan. (22)

Although Morocco has a committee to coordinate efforts to address trafficking in persons, as well as the Technical Committee Under the Special Ministerial Commission for Children for the Protection and Improvement of Childhood to address child protection in general, it does not have active coordinating mechanism to address all forms of child labor. (2)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Ministry of Solidarity, Social Inclusion, and Family (MSISF) Integrated Public Policy on the Protection of Children in Morocco	Promotes an interdisciplinary approach to respond to the exploitation of children and other relevant issues. (23) Implemented by MEIPEEC. (2,14)
National Strategy to Address Trafficking in Persons†	Aims to raise awareness of human trafficking and improve the identification and referral of victims to services. Enacted in March 2023 with assistance from international partners. (21,22)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In late 2022, the Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills made arrangements with the ILO and NGOs to draft a strategic action plan to address the worst forms of child labor. (2,14)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

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Table 6. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Social Cohesion Support Fund†	Programs that aim to improve access to education. Include the MSISF-funded Tayssir Conditional Cash Transfer Program that provides direct cash transfers to qualifying families whose children meet school attendance criteria. (24) These cash transfers continued in 2022. (14)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Morocco.

‡ The Government of Morocco had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (2,25)

Although the government has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including for children engaged in forced domestic work, especially in rural areas where undercounting the extent to which children are engaged in labor is likely, and in commercial sexual exploitation. (26)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Western Sahara (Table 7).

Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children age 15 and under are protected by law, including children who work in artisan and handicraft sectors for family businesses.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.	2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child for prostitution.	2022
Coordination	Establish a coordinating mechanism to prevent and eliminate all forms of child labor.	2022
Social Programs	Remove barriers to education, such as insufficient facilities and a lack of reliable and safe transportation, particularly in rural areas.	2015 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, including in rural areas and in forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.	2017 – 2022
	Collect and publish information on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs, including in farming and forestry.	2013 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Yemen made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor conducted four inspections based on complaints. However, despite this initiative, Yemen is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement practices that delay advancement to eliminate child labor. There is evidence of recruitment and use of children in hostilities by state armed forces in contravention of Yemeni law. Furthermore, the government failed to make efforts to address discrimination in schools against children from the Muhamasheen (“marginalized”) community, leading to their increased vulnerability to child labor. Children in Yemen are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and use in armed conflict, including by Houthi insurgent forces and other armed groups. Children also perform dangerous tasks in fishing. Research found no evidence of a government policy on worst forms of child labor outside of child soldiering. Moreover, the Republic of Yemen government continued to have limited operational control over its ministries and was unable to enforce regulations to address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Yemen.

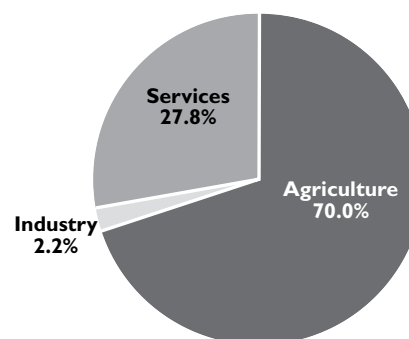
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	13.6 (834,866)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	10.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		72.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from National Child Labour Survey (NCLS), 2010. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 7-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming,† including harvesting dates (3-5)
	Fishing,† activities unknown (5-7)
Industry	Construction† and brick production (3,4,6,7)
	Working in carpentry† and welding† workshops (4,6,7)
Services	Street work, including selling items, and begging (3-6,8-11)
	Working in auto repair and mechanic shops† and car washes, and collecting fares in taxis (3)
	Selling goods in stores, transporting goods, working in bakeries (3,11)
	Voluntarily recruited children used in hostilities by state armed groups (12-17)

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,6,7,18,19)
	Use in illicit activities, including in trafficking of drugs (4,5,7,20,21)
	Forced labor, including domestic work, begging, and working in small shops (19,20)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (4-7,10,16,17,22-27)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




Armed conflict in Yemen continued in 2022, and security and access restrictions constrained international observers’ ability to fully monitor grave violations, including the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Armed groups, especially the Houthis, but also pro-government militias, recruited and used child soldiers in armed combat in 2022. (5,10,23,26,28) According to the UN, the Houthis recruited and used 105 children while Yemeni Armed Forces recruited and used 4 children. (28) In areas under Houthi control, children are indoctrinated in schools and recruited into armed forces; these practices have been documented in 34 schools in 6 governorates. (25) Boys recruited by the Houthis are often used in combat roles and girls are used as recruiters, guards, spies, and in other non-combat roles. (25) Children are also used by the Houthis to transport drugs to the frontlines and neighboring countries. (5)

Children in Yemen continue to face significant barriers to education. (5) According to UNICEF, over 2 million boys and girls are not attending school due to poverty, conflict, and lack of educational opportunities. Direct effects of the war, including destruction of schools, have prevented children from attending classes. (29) In addition, around 170,000 teachers in Houthi-controlled areas have not received salaries since 2016. (10) Many families also continue to be unable to afford transportation costs to schools, and Yemen's multiple crises have pushed families further into poverty, making it increasingly difficult to access education. (5,30) Among the *Muhamasheen* ("marginalized") minority group, generally of African origin, illiteracy rates are high, and child labor in the form of begging is prevalent. This community also suffers from general poverty and severe societal discrimination. (31,32) Many *Muhamasheen* children do not have birth certificates, which are required for enrollment in schools. They face harassment, bullying, and violence at school, and are dismissed from school or asked to clean the bathrooms; this treatment leads some to drop out of school. (32,33) *Muhamasheen* boys are vulnerable to sexual violence by armed actors, particularly while they engage in child labor, even if they are not directly involved in armed conflict. (33) Research did not discover any government efforts to address discrimination.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Yemen has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Yemen's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including deficiencies in laws prohibiting child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Articles 5 and 27 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Articles 48 and 49 of the Labor Code (34,35)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 7 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Articles 49 and 154 of the Labor Code (34,35)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 7, 8, and 15 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (34)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Articles 6 and 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Article 248 of the Penal Code (34,36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 6 and 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (34)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 147 and 163 of the Child Rights Law; Article 279 of the Penal Code; Articles 6 and 25 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (34,36,37)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 24 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Articles 148 and 162 of the Child Rights Law (34,37)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 149 of the Child Rights Law (37)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 6(b) of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (34)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 18 of the General Education Law (38)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 87 of the Child Rights Law (37)

* Country has no conscription (39)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (34)

Although Article 248 of the Penal Code criminalizes buying, selling, and dealing in human beings, the legal framework does not appear to prohibit or provide punishments for forced labor. (36) The law related to child trafficking is insufficient because it only provides criminal penalties for someone who has bought, sold, or dispensed of a child. (34) The legal framework does not adequately prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child in pornography and pornographic performances, or using a child in prostitution. (34,37) The minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (34,38)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, research found limited evidence that law enforcement agencies in Yemen took actions to address child labor.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's (MOSAL) Child Labor Unit	Enforces child labor laws, conducts inspections, informs the Ministry of the Interior of any violations, and refers children found during inspections to appropriate social services. (4)
Ministry of the Interior	Enforces child labor laws. Police departments within this ministry handle human trafficking investigations. (4)
Ministry of Justice	Enforces child labor laws; prosecutes and adjudicates child labor cases. (4)

Yemen

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Labor Law Enforcement

Research found limited information that labor law enforcement agencies in Yemen took actions to address child labor.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen continued to have limited operational control over its ministries and was largely unable to enforce regulations to combat child labor. (4,5) It is the policy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL) to conduct inspections after child labor complaints; however, the public is not accustomed to interacting with its hotline, which is the only complaint mechanism. (4) In 2022, MOSAL reported that it conducted four inspections based on complaints; however, the results of these inspections are unknown. (5) MOSAL also lacks the authority to enforce child labor laws in temporary employment, farming, or domestic work. (7,35) Additionally, research indicates that Yemen does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (5,40)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Yemen took actions to address child labor.

The government is unable to investigate, prosecute, or convict government officials allegedly complicit in human trafficking offenses, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Republic of Yemen Government's Armed Forces. (6) Further, the government lacked the capacity to adequately investigate and prosecute labor violations as a criminal matter. (4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 6. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor	Coordinates child labor issues in Yemen. Comprises representatives from MOSAL, other state agencies, the ILO, and local NGOs. (4) The National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor was not active during the reporting period. (5)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 7). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of policies that cover all worst forms of child labor that exist in the country.

Table 7. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces	Ensures that national laws comply with international standards, prohibits the recruitment and use of children in armed forces, investigates allegations of violations, and facilitates UN access to monitor compliance. (16) Signed with the UN in 2014. Active in 2022. (43)

Although the Republic of Yemen has adopted the Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation of children. (24) The government drafted a National Plan to Reduce Child Labor in a previous reporting period; however, the plan remains pending approval. The government has emphasized that it could not implement the plan without donor support. (24)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government funded or participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor.

Although the Republic of Yemen participates in programs that address access to education, research found no evidence of any programs with the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (44)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Yemen (Table 8).

Table 8. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits forced labor.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that trafficking of children, including recruitment, harboring, transportation, transfer, and receipt, for purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation, is criminalized and punishments are prescribed.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law adequately prohibits and provides punishments for using, procuring, or offering a child in pornography and pornographic performances, and using a child in prostitution.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age.	2018 – 2022
	Enforce laws prohibiting children under age 18 from joining the Yemeni Armed Forces. Ensure that any children under age 18 already in the Yemeni Armed Forces and pro-government militias do not engage in combat.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has the capacity to enforce labor laws, including sufficient funding, labor inspectors, office facilities, transportation, and fuel.	2015 – 2022
	Employ at least 195 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 7.8 million people.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that authorities enforce minimum age protections in all sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are prevalent, including in temporary employment, farming, and domestic work.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies enforce child labor laws and publish information on enforcement activities.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor is active and able to carry out its intended mandates.	2017 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.	2009 – 2022
Social Programs	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor and expand programs to improve children's equal access to education, particularly for <i>Muhamasheen</i> children.	2013 – 2022
	Institute a rehabilitation and reintegration program for children engaged in armed conflict and children involved in other worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and fishing.	2011 – 2022

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In 2022, Zambia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government updated its Trafficking in Persons Act, removing the requirement that force, fraud, and other forms of coercion be demonstrated to establish a child trafficking crime, and launched the National Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants and the National Migrant Policy, which include strategies to protect Zambian and migrant children from human trafficking and labor exploitation. In addition, the government recruited 30,000 new teachers, deploying them to rural areas where vulnerabilities to child labor are the highest. However, children in Zambia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in agriculture. The Education Act does not specify a compulsory education age. In addition, labor inspectors do not routinely inspect non-registered businesses in which child labor is known to occur.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government published updated child labor data indicating over 400,000 children were engaged in child labor, with most child labor occurring in the agricultural sector. (1)

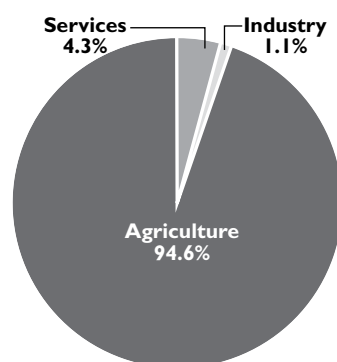
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.8 (400,423)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	74.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	7.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		80.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2013, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (2)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s Analysis of Statistics from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2021. (3)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Work in the production of cotton,† tobacco,† and other cash crops (4-6)
	Raising and herding† cattle (4,6)
	Fishing† (6-8)
	Production of charcoal† (9)
	Forestry, including loading of timber (10,11)
Industry	Mining of tin, copper, chrome, gold, ore, and gems, including manganese (6-8,12,13)
	Work in quarries, including carrying heavy loads† and crushing stones† (6,7)
Services	Domestic work (6,7)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including begging and vending (6-8)
	Garbage disposal (6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in agriculture, herding, construction, domestic work, mining, small businesses, and textile production (14-16)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,17)
	Forced begging (16)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the selling of drugs (6)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Child labor in Zambia is most prevalent in the agricultural sector and sometimes involves forced labor. (10,16,18) Traffickers exploit children from rural areas in Zambia and Malawi to cities for domestic work and to rural areas for agriculture. (16) Sources reported the exploitation of children for cattle herding, which sometimes involves parents repaying debts by sending children, particularly young boys, to work as cattle herders for the people to whom they are indebted. (10) Orphans, street children, children with disabilities, and children from poor households are particularly vulnerable to child trafficking. (8,16,19) In addition, traffickers exploit children from neighboring countries for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (20)







A NGO report found that children engage in various forms of work at artisanal mining sites, including digging, transporting and crushing rock, and providing various forms of domestic services in mining areas, such as cooking, childcare, and selling of foodstuffs. Children working in mining areas reported various health problems, including bodily injuries, illnesses, sight and vision problems, and exposure to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. (13) Illegal mining syndicates, called *jerabo* gangs, employ children in the Copperbelt province for mining activities, including forcing children to load trucks with stolen copper ore. (17,21) Commercial sexual exploitation of children also occurs, particularly along Zambia's borders and transit corridors. (15,17)

Long distances to schools, particularly in rural areas, an insufficient number of teachers and classrooms, lack of sanitation facilities within schools, and costs of learning materials are barriers to education. (10,22,23) The high prevalence of early marriage of girls increases the vulnerability of children to child labor; children without birth certificates are not able to enroll in school, and once girls marry, they sometimes leave school before reaching the minimum working age and engage in work outside the household. (10,19) During the reporting period, the government continued implementation of its free universal education policy, recruiting 30,000 new teachers for deployment in rural areas of Zambia where educational resources have been most lacking and where there are increased vulnerabilities to child labor because of rural poverty and close proximity to farms. (6,24)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Zambia has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Zambia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including an undefined age range for compulsory education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 24 of the Constitution; Sections 16 and 81 of the Employment Code Act; Section 13 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (25-27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	19	Section 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 13 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (26,27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Prohibition of Employment of Young Persons and Children (Hazardous Labor) Order; Section 137(2)(n) of the Employment Code Act (26,28,29)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 14 and 24 of the Constitution; Sections 143, 261, and 263 of the Penal Code; Section 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Section 8 of the Employment Code Act (25,26,30,31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 17 of Amendment to the Constitution; Section 143 of the Penal Code; Sections 2 and 3 (1-4) of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, as amended by the Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act of 2022; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 17 of the Children's Code Act (25-27,30-32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 143 and 144 of the Penal Code; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 19 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (26,27,31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 20 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (26,27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 14 of the Defense Act (33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act; Section 14 of the Children's Code Act of 2022 (26,27,30)
Compulsory Education Age	No		Sections 16 and 17 of the Education Act (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 15 of the Education Act (34)

* Country has no conscription (35)

The government amended the law on trafficking in persons, eliminating previous requirements for demonstration of threats, force, intimidation, or other forms of coercion to constitute a child trafficking offense. (32) In addition, the government enacted the Children's Code Act of 2022, affirming and harmonizing legal protections of children from child labor, including its worst forms, while outlining mandates and responsibilities of government agencies to protect children. (6,27)

The law establishes a light work framework for employment of children ages 13 to 15 but has not identified permitted light work activities. (26,36) The Education Act requires that the government provide free education up to the ninth grade and stipulates that education is compulsory for children of "school-going age." The Act, however, does not set a specific age for which education is compulsory or define "school-going age," which may allow children to leave school before they are legally able to work and thereby increase their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (34,37)

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III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS)	Implements, enforces, and regulates child labor laws. Advises other government agencies on child labor issues and coordinates government efforts to prevent child labor through its Child Labor Unit. The Child Labor Unit, which falls under the labor inspectorate, carries out inspections related to child labor. (10,38) The MLSS generally conducts planned labor inspections only in registered private institutions; inspections of unregistered institutions, including at artisanal mining sites, farms, and private homes in which child labor is most common, primarily occur in response to complaints. (39-41) The MLSS continues conducting community sensitization campaigns and coordinating with local police to build public understanding of the labor inspectorate's role and enforcement mandates to facilitate more inspections of private and unregistered institutions. (41,42)
Ministry of Home Affairs	Enforces criminal laws against human trafficking, child commercial exploitation, use of children as soldiers, and use of children in illegal activities through its Immigration Department and Drug Enforcement Commission. (10) The 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act created a new Anti-Human Trafficking Department, responsible for enforcement of trafficking in persons laws, and housed within the Ministry of Home Affairs. (6,32)
Zambia Police Service	Collaborates with the Ministry of Justice to investigate and prosecute child labor cases. (10) Handles the enforcement of laws against human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities through its Child Protection and Victim Support units. (10,43) Works with immigration officials and local officials to respond to child trafficking, enforce child labor laws, and remove vulnerable children from the streets, placing them into families, foster homes, or in safe homes. (10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Zambia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS) that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws, including insufficient financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$26,000 (10)	\$130,000 (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	240 (10)	179 (42)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (10)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	1,800 (10)	2,324 (42)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (44)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (44)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (44)	Unknown (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (6)

Although the MLSS reported that the budget for the labor inspectorate in 2022 was five times the amount reported in 2021, the MLSS also stated that inadequate resources, including an insufficient budget, limited office space, inadequate training, and a lack of transportation and fuel have prevented it from adequately conducting inspections countrywide. (10,39,45,46)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Zambia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (10)	No (6)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	1 (47)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	3 (48)	1 (47)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (47)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (6,47)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (6)

In 2022, law enforcement officials investigated and initiated one prosecution related to the human trafficking of 13 girls for sexual exploitation; research, however, was unable to determine whether the government secured a conviction and imposed penalties for this particular case. Because law enforcement authorities did not provide age-specific information of human trafficking victims, the government may have undertaken criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor that are not reflected in this report. (47) Law enforcement agencies do not have sufficient financial and human resources to address human trafficking, and standard operating procedures to screen and identify victims are not fully executed as a result. (17,42)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Advises and oversees child labor matters, including implementation of hazardous work regulations. Chaired by the MLSS and comprises government representatives, employers, trade unions, and civil society members. Local-level coordination of child labor matters is maintained through District Child Labor Committees, consisting of local representatives of Zambia Police Service; the MLSS; the Ministry of Community Development, Mother, and Child Health; and civil society stakeholders. (14) During the reporting period, the National Steering Committee on Child Labor participated in television and radio sensitization campaigns and an event commemorating World Day Against Child Labor. (6) District-Level Child Labor Committees, however, were largely inactive during the reporting period, likely limiting the efficacy of the National Steering Committee and leading to gaps in coordination on child labor issues at the local level. (6)

Communication lapses among government agencies regarding mandates and responsibilities may hinder coordination and the ability of agencies to implement their mandates related to the worst forms of child labor. (14)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a policy related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Child Labor Policy	Outlines objectives for prevention and elimination of child labor and designates responsible agencies to address child labor issues. (49) Implemented through the government's National Action Plan (NAP) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2020–2025), which outlines child labor activities through 2025. (7) Government conducted sensitization activities in support of the NAP, including World Day Against Child Labor. (6)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (14,50-52)

On December 2, 2022, the government launched the National Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants and the National Migrant Policy, which include strategies to protect Zambian and migrant children from human trafficking and labor exploitation. (47,53) The government has a National Employment and Labor Market Policy which outlines objectives for promoting decent work in Zambia, but the policy does not incorporate strategies for prevention and elimination of child labor. (54) Also, the government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Policy. (55)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Social Cash Transfer Program†	Government program to provide funds to families for food security, poverty reduction, child welfare, and increasing school enrollment. In 2022, the government significantly increased the number of individuals receiving benefits under the Social Cash Transfer Program, from 700,000 in 2021, to between 974,000 and 1,027,000 individuals in 2022, as well as increased the size of household allocations from previous reporting periods. (56,57) However, research found problems with tracking of payments and cash flows within the Social Cash Transfer System that resulted in irregular payment disbursements, including delayed and reduced payments, for vulnerable families receiving funds. (11,29) Moreover, an evaluation of the Social Cash Transfer Program suggests that the transfers may actually have led to a net increase in child labor, particularly in farm work and cattle herding, because many families used funds from the program to expand their agricultural and livestock holdings, which resulted in an increase of children's work activities within the home. Children were also more likely to work excessively long hours, and there was no reduction in children's work outside of the home. (58)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Zambia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (14,59)

Although Zambia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem in all relevant sectors, particularly regarding child labor in agriculture, domestic work, mining, and commercial sexual exploitation.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Zambia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2018 – 2022
	Determine the list of light work activities permitted for children ages 13 to 15.	2018 – 2022
	Establish through statutory instrument the age of 15 as the "school-going age" for compulsory education, to align with the minimum age for work.	2012 – 2022

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase planned inspections in unregistered businesses, including artisanal mining sites, farms, and private homes, to ensure monitoring of all sectors in which children are working.	2010 – 2022
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, and the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2021 – 2022
	Increase fiscal and material resources, including vehicles and fuel, office space, and training, for the labor inspectorate to enforce labor laws throughout the country.	2010 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including training of new investigators, the number of convictions, and whether penalties were imposed.	2014 – 2022
	Develop and implement consistent procedures to screen and identify human trafficking victims while increasing fiscal and human resources for criminal law enforcement agencies working to address human trafficking of children.	2018 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure all coordinating bodies, including District-Level Child Labor Committees, are active and able to coordinate child labor prevention activities at the local level.	2021 – 2022
	Improve lines of communication and clarify responsibilities among agencies to improve effectiveness and referrals to social services.	2011 – 2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Policy and the National Employment and Labor Market Policy.	2013 – 2022
Social Programs	Address barriers to education by increasing schools in rural areas, increasing number of teachers and classrooms, defraying auxiliary education costs, and providing targeted support for girls who enter into early marriage to continue education.	2012 – 2022
	Harmonize child labor prevention and elimination measures and improve financial tracking in the Social Cash Transfer Program.	2020 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem in all relevant sectors, including agriculture, mining, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2011 – 2022

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MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Zimbabwe made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government created a new Child Labor Unit within the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare to steer the Ministry's child labor activities, and worked with NGOs to carry out research, coordination, and compliance investigations targeting the tea, tobacco, and other sectors where there is high prevalence of child labor. In addition, the government substantially expanded the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Program and the Basic Education Assistance Module, which provide livelihood and educational assistance to families that have high vulnerability to child labor. However, Zimbabwe is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. State-aligned actors engaged in a pattern of threats and intimidation of worker organizations and trade unions, which are key stakeholders in the identification and prevention of child labor. Children in Zimbabwe are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in mines and on farms. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture, including in the harvesting of sugarcane and tobacco. Law enforcement agencies lack resources to enforce child labor laws.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Zimbabwe.

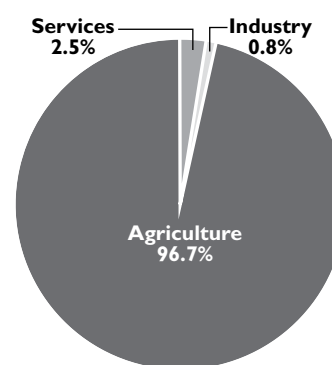
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	14.8 (617,582)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	16.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		84.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2019. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including in the production of tea, tobacco, cotton, and sugarcane (3-9)
	Fishing, including casting nets, hauling fish loads, and sorting fish (4,10,11)
	Work in forestry, such as dragging logs from felling sites and loading logs for transport (4,10)
	Cattle herding (3,10)
Industry	Mining and panning of gold, using dangerous chemicals such as cyanide and mercury, and extracting material from underground passages and quarries† (4,9,12-15)
	Molding bricks (13,16,17)
Services	Street work, including vending and begging (9,18-20)
	Domestic work, including childcare, house cleaning, and gardening (4,9,21)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Use in illicit activities, including selling of drugs (9,22)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9,22-24)
	Forced labor in agriculture, including herding cattle, mining, and domestic work (22)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

Deteriorating economic conditions and the ongoing effects of climate change (including droughts, flash floods, and crop failures) strain rural households and likely contribute to vulnerabilities to child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (9,25-27) Commercial sexual exploitation, often involving girls from poor and distressed rural households, occurs in urban centers, along major transit corridors, and in mining areas. (9,13,22,24,27) Human traffickers frequently lure orphans or children from rural households for work in cities with promises of educational opportunity or adoption. Such children are then subjected to domestic service or are forced to work in mining. (22) However, the reopening of schools, following COVID-19 closures, likely resulted in a reduction of children working in prostitution, street begging, domestic services, informal trading, agriculture, and artisanal mining. (9)

Children ages 8 to 17 work on tobacco farms, performing activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, packing, and grading tobacco, tasks that often expose them to toxic chemicals and the effects of nicotine from handling tobacco leaves. (9,15,28) Children also work on sugar plantations in the southeastern part of the country, where they use dangerous tools and endure high temperatures. (3,29) Moreover, children work at artisanal and small-scale gold-mining sites, where they face risks including collapsed mines and exposure to mercury, and in commercial sexual exploitation around mining areas. In some cases, armed criminal groups have lured children to mining sites with the promise of self-employment and then forced them to mine gold under the threat of physical harm or death. (30)

In 2022 and during the run up to the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections, the government and state-aligned Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) political party engaged in a variety of tactics intended to obstruct, hinder, and in some cases violate the rights of workers and worker-aligned organizations advocating for better working conditions, including the identification and prevention of child labor. (31-33) At least one trade union alleged ZANU-PF activists obstructed a delegation of workers and civil society organizations seeking to access a commercial farm to investigate child labor claims. (31,32) Although the government has contested this allegation, research finds a pattern of state and ZANU-PF officials infiltrating trade union activities and interfering with or harassing attending workers. (33) As civil society organizations and labor unions have been integral to reporting and advocacy on identification and prevention of child labor, including in the mining and agricultural sector, these actions significantly inhibit Zimbabwe's progress in eliminating child labor.




The Education Amendment Act stipulates children's right to education regardless of race, nationality, or place of birth. (34,35) However, refugees and undocumented children who come to Zimbabwe from neighboring countries, and children who otherwise lack birth certificates, face barriers to education because, beginning in grade seven, children must present identity documents to sit for national exams. (8,36-38) As a result of these barriers, children may drop out of school, increasing their vulnerability to child labor. (10) To address gaps in birth registration the government has been operating a mobile birth registration program to assist citizens in receiving identity documents, including birth certificates. (39,40) In addition, poor school infrastructure, including lack of water and hygiene facilities, an insufficient number of teachers, and long travel distances to reach schools may contribute to higher dropout rates and vulnerability to child labor, particularly in rural areas. (9)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Zimbabwe has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Zimbabwe's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of criminal prohibitions against slavery.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 11 of the Labor Act; Section 10A of the Children's Act (41,42)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 11.4 of the Labor Act; Section 10A(4) of the Children's Act (41,42)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 3.1 of the Labor Relations (Employment of Children and Young Persons) Regulations; Section 2 of the Children's Act (41,43)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Sections 54 and 55 of the Constitution; Sections 2 and 4A of the Labor Act; Sections 2 and 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (42,44,45)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (45)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 61, 83, 86, and 87 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 8(2) a of the Children's Act; Sections 2 and 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (41,45,46)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 156 of the Criminal Law Act; Section 10 of the Children's Act (41,46)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Sections 5, 9, and 10 of the National Service Act (47)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Section 9 of the National Service Act (47)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16‡	Sections 2 and 5 of the Education Act (34,35)
Free Public Education	No		Sections 5, 6, and 13 of the Education Act (34,35)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (48)

Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize slavery. (45) In addition, although the Education Act establishes the right of children to state-funded education up to age 16, the law maintains the ability of the Minister of Education to institute instructional fees. (34,35)

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III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority and operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare (MPSLSW)	Enforces labor and anti-human trafficking laws and investigates labor-related complaints, including those involving child labor. (49) In addition to its 120 designated labor inspectors, MPSLSW coordinates with 40 Occupational Health and Safety inspectors, 200 National Employment Council representatives, and 60 inspectors from the Ministry of Mines to identify and remove children from child labor. (9) Also conducts industry- and sectoral-based labor inspections through appointed agents of national employment councils, comprising representation from both employers' associations and trade unions. (50,51) During the reporting period, MPSLSW created a new Child Labor Unit to support the Ministry's research, awareness raising, and engagement with stakeholders to monitor its activities earmarked for child labor elimination. The Child Labor Unit holds quarterly working groups to discuss sectors vulnerable to child labor, including tobacco, sugar, tea, and artisanal and small-scale mining. (52)
Zimbabwe Republic Police	Enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor in conjunction with MPSLSW, the judiciary, and the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. (9,49)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Zimbabwe took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare (MPSLSW) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of authority to assess penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (8)	\$210,000 (52)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (10)	120 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (42)	No (42)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (8)	Yes (52)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (8)	8,028 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (8)	Yes (52)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (8)	Yes (52)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (42)	Yes (52)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (52)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (52)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (52)

Research indicates that a limited number of inspectors and a lack of resources, such as available vehicles and office facilities, likely hinder the labor inspectorate's ability to conduct child labor investigations and adequately monitor rural farms at which child labor occurs. (9,10,50,53,54) Although the Labor Act outlines labor inspectors' authority to arbitrate labor disputes, it does not stipulate their authority to assess penalties for labor inspections. (42) Furthermore, labor inspectors also oversee arbitration and conciliation, a responsibility that compromises their ability to conduct onsite investigations to address child labor. (55)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Zimbabwe took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MPSLSW that may hinder adequate criminal and labor law enforcement, including a lack of information on law enforcement efforts.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (8)	Yes (56)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (8)	10 (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (9)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of activity of coordinating bodies.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Leads government coordination to address the worst forms of child labor. (9) Chaired by MPSLSW and includes the Ministries of Health and Child Care; Primary and Secondary Education; and Youth Development, Indigenization, and Economic Empowerment. Also includes international organizations and civil society groups, such as workers' and employers' organizations. (10) Research was unable to determine whether the National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor was active during the reporting period. (9)

During the reporting period, the government, the Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board, and Eradicating Child Labor in Tobacco Foundation created a working group to address child labor concerns in the tobacco sector and jointly carried out a survey on child labor to strengthen and prioritize coordination efforts. (9) In addition, the government participated in the Rainforest Alliance's tea certification program, which establishes standards to prevent child labor, including hazardous work, in the tea sector. (9)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor	Promotes understanding of child labor issues and coordination related to child labor cases. Consists of three focus areas: education assistance, poverty assistance through a cash transfer scheme, and health assistance. (10) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor during the reporting period.
Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action	Aims to implement the Palermo Protocol through the development of strategies to address human trafficking, with an emphasis on prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. During the reporting period, the government drafted a Trafficking in Persons Amendment Bill; however, it had to restart the process because of a procedural error. (56) Also during the reporting period, the government approved an updated the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2023–2028), outlining key agencies, coordination and referral mechanisms, and policy instruments that assist in the prevention and response to human trafficking, with special consideration for the rights and needs of children. (9)

‡ The government had other policies that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (57)

In 2022, the government directed each of its 46 National Employment Councils, which set sectoral-specific policies related to employment and labor relations, to establish policies to prevent child labor in their sector, including developing a list of hazardous work within each sector in which children are working. To date, 23 out of 46 National Employment Councils have created hazardous work lists. (9,52)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Harmonized Social Cash Transfer†	Government-funded unconditional cash transfer program, with support from UNICEF, to assist labor-constrained and food-insecure households to avert coping strategies, such as child labor. (10) As of April 2022, the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Program covered 78,000 households across 20 districts, an increase from 55,000 households in 2021. (9) In addition, the government coordinated with UNICEF to provide emergency cash transfers to families facing extreme poverty and other vulnerabilities to child labor. (58)
Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)†	Government program, with support by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, that provides basic financial assistance to families for education costs, such as tuition and examination fees. Aims to keep children in school and to enroll children who lack access to school because of economic hardship. (49) Program budget of approximately \$20 million (5.6 billion Zimbabwean dollars) reached 1.5 million children during the reporting period, a significant increase from 859,000 children receiving assistance in 2021. (9,59) The budgetary allocation for 2022 was likely an increase from previous years, though was offset by rapid inflation that occurred during the reporting period. (9,60) Research has found that benefits under the BEAM programs do not consistently reach targeted families in need of educational assistance, limiting the capacity of the program to fully address child labor that results from poverty and auxiliary educational expenses. (8-10)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Zimbabwe.

The government continued to coordinate with UNICEF around various child protection initiatives that relate to root causes of child labor in Zimbabwe, including building capacity to respond to the needs of migrant and unaccompanied children, birth registration and collection of vital statistics, and development of an early warning systems to identify children at risk of dropping out of school. Although Zimbabwe has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially child labor in agriculture, mining, and commercial sexual exploitation. (61-63)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Zimbabwe (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery.	2021 – 2022
	Establish, by law, free basic education by removing ability of Education Minister to impose discretionary school fees.	2009 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.	2017 – 2022
	Increase financial resources and the number of labor inspectors from 120 to 355 to address labor violations and enforce minimum age protections in all sectors, including agriculture.	2017 – 2022
	Publish information on the government's labor, including identified child labor violations penalties assessed, and fines collected.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information on the government's criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of prosecutions initiated, the number of convictions, and whether the government-imposed penalties.	2015 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure the National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor is able to coordinate on awareness raising activities and responses to identified child labor cases.	2016 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2010 – 2022

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Cease activities related to interference and harassment of labor unions and worker-aligned organizations advocating for conditions of work and social protection, including elimination of child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Improve access to secondary school by ensuring that all children are registered at birth and enabling children without access to identity documents, such as orphan children, migrants, and refugees, to take secondary school examinations.	2014 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to make education accessible to all children, including children living in rural areas, by improving access to water and hygiene facilities within schools, reducing travel distances to schools, and increasing the number of teachers.	2016 – 2022
	Improve systems for the distribution of social support benefits from the Basic Education Assistance Module program to ensure that allocations reach vulnerable households that are most in need of the benefits.	2020 – 2022
	Expand existing social programs to address child labor, especially child labor in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, and mining.	2010 – 2022

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WHAT CAN **YOU** DO TO HELP ADDRESS CHILD LABOR AND FORCED LABOR?

ASK QUESTIONS

- **Could some of the goods I buy** be made by child labor or forced labor?
- **Do workers have a voice** to speak out against labor abuses?
- **What are companies doing** to end child labor and forced labor in global supply chains?
- **What are governments doing** to combat child labor and forced labor?

TAKE ACTION

- **Empower yourself with knowledge** by downloading USDOL's **Sweat & Toil** app and accessing **Comply Chain** and **Better Trade Tool**.
- **Make your voice heard** by spreading the word among friends, family, and with the companies where you spend your money.
- **Show your support** for organizations that are working to end these abuses.

DEMAND CHANGE

ADVOCATE FOR A WORLD IN WHICH:

- **Workers everywhere can raise their voices** against child labor, forced labor, and other abuses.
- **Companies make serious commitments** to ensure that global supply chains are free of products made by child labor and forced labor, especially those on USDOL's **List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor**.
- **Your investments have a positive social impact** by promoting responsible labor practices.
- **Governments work vigorously** to adopt the country-specific suggested actions in USDOL's **Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor**.

Learn more: dol.gov/EndChildLabor
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