

In 2016, Ethiopia made a significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government adopted the Overseas Employment Proclamation that prohibits employment agencies from recruiting workers younger than 18 and allows the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to revoke the license of any agency that violates the prohibition. The Government also established a mechanism to refer victims of human trafficking to social services and trained labor inspectors, police officers, and judges on child labor issues. In addition, the Government adopted the National Human Rights Action Plan, which includes efforts to eliminate child labor, and participated in and implemented several programs to combat the worst forms of child labor. However, children in Ethiopia perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Children also engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in domestic work and textile weaving. The law in Ethiopia does not include free basic education or a compulsory age for education, leaving children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Social programs to combat child labor have not sufficiently targeted sectors with high incidences of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Ethiopia perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Children also engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in domestic work and textile weaving.(1-3) 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	22.0 (5,545,319)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	54.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	17.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		53.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2014, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016.(4)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2011.(5)

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 apples, bananas, coffee, cotton, and khat (6-10)
	Herding livestock, including cattle (7, 10-13)
	Fishing,† activities unknown (7, 10, 13)
Industry	Mining† gold (6, 13)
	Quarrying† (7)
	Construction,† including carrying heavy loads and digging (7, 10, 13-15)
	Making pottery products (7)
Services	Traditional weaving of (hand-woven) textiles (7, 13, 16)
	Domestic work† (1-3, 9, 10, 14)
	Unpaid household services, including carrying heavy loads of water and firewood (7, 9, 13)
	Street work,† including as shoe shiners, assistants to taxi drivers, vendors, porters, and beggars (1, 7, 10, 12, 13, 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 (2, 3, 12, 17, 18)
	Forced labor in domestic work, herding, street vending, and traditional weaving of hand-woven textiles, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3, 7, 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.

Sources indicate that children are trafficked from rural areas to Addis Ababa and to other regions of the country for forced labor in the weaving industry or to work as domestic servants.(3, 7, 10) According to IOM officials, the severe drought of 2015-2016 increased internal trafficking.(10, 19)




After ongoing protests in the Oromia region, the Government temporarily closed schools for weeks, disrupting children’s access to education through the presence of security forces and arrests of both teachers and students.(20) In addition, the continued lack of adequate schools and trained teachers in rural areas increases children’s risk of entering the workforce at a young age. The cost of school supplies also keeps some children from attending school.(10, 13, 21, 22) In the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (SNNPR), sexual abuse and harassment of girls in schools is an additional barrier to education.(22)

In August, the Government launched a public awareness campaign to increase birth registration of children to ensure that they have access to services such as education, because birth certificates are required for initial school registration.(10, 23-26)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF 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	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Ethiopia’s legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Article 89(2) of the Labour Proclamation (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18 [‡]	Articles 89(1) and 89(3) of the Labour Proclamation (27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 89(4) of the Labour Proclamation; Directive on Prohibited Occupations for Young Workers (27, 28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 18(3) of the Constitution; Article 596 of the Criminal Code; Articles 2.4 and 3–4 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (29-31)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 18(2) of the Constitution; Articles 597, 635, and 637 of the Criminal Code; Article 3.2 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (29-31)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 634–636 of the Criminal Code; Article 2.4 and 3–4 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (30, 31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 525 of the Criminal Code (30)
Minimum Age for Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 270 of the Criminal Code (30)
Non-state Compulsory	Yes	18	Article 2.3 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (31)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

* No conscription (30)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (27)

In 2016, the Government of Ethiopia enacted Ethiopia's Overseas Employment Proclamation, which restricts overseas employment of Ethiopians to those 18 or older and allows the Government to revoke the license of any employment agency that violates the law. The ban on regular migration, however, has increased irregular migration, increasing vulnerability to trafficking.(19, 32)

Not all Ethiopian laws related to child labor are completely in compliance with international standards. Article 89(5) of the Labour Proclamation allows children ages 14 to 16 to engage in certain forms of hazardous work, if the work is performed following a government-approved vocational training course, in contradiction to ILO Convention 138.(27, 33) The minimum age provisions of the law do not apply to children working outside of a contractual employment relationship.(10, 33) The types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover traditional weaving, an area of work in which there is evidence of using dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools; or work that involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads.(27, 28)

Although it does not appear that there are any laws that provide free basic education or a compulsory education age, government policy sufficiently provides for free basic education through grade 10.(10, 13, 14, 26, 33, 34)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5). However, gaps in labor law enforcement remain and some enforcement information is not available.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA)	Conduct labor inspections of formal worksites at the regional level through its regional Bureaus of Labor and Social Affairs (BOLSAs).(10, 35) Through its Occupational Safety and Health Case Team (OSHCT), enforce occupational safety, health, and wage and hour protections, which include child labor laws.(12, 24, 35) Collect and analyze data and make policy recommendations on labor.(8, 35)
Ethiopian Federal Police Commission	Investigate criminal violations of laws that protect against the worst forms of child labor.(6, 14, 36) Through its Special Child Protection Units in 10 Addis Ababa sub-city police stations, work to combat the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.(37, 38) Through its Human Trafficking and Narcotics Section, collaborate with the prosecutor's office to investigate human trafficking, prosecute offenders, and report and collect human trafficking data.(14)
Office of Attorney General	Prosecute criminal violations of child labor laws. Lead the Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Task Force.(10, 24, 36)

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs	Develop and implement programs to protect vulnerable children and monitor alleged violations of child protection laws, including the worst forms of child labor.(2, 39)

Given that construction is an industry with evidence of child labor, during the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Construction (MOC) to ensure that MOC considers labor inspection reports of a company when reviewing its construction license.(10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2016, labor law enforcement agencies in Ethiopia took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$300,000 (15)	\$388,000 (10)
Number of Labor Inspectors	423 (15)	517 (10)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (15)	No (10)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (15)	Yes (36)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (10)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (15)	Yes (10)
Number of Labor Inspections	37,500 (15)	52,937 [‡] (26)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Number of Penalties that Were Collected	N/A	N/A (10)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (15)	Yes (10)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (15)	Yes (10)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Unknown	Yes (10)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (15)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (10)

[‡] Data are from September 11, 2015 to December 31, 2016.

Labor inspectors received regular training on domestic and international laws pertaining to work prohibited for youth laborers, as well as techniques to identify child laborers, including on the new Revised Overseas Employment Proclamation. In October 2016, MOLSA conducted a workshop for 46 regional and Addis Ababa labor inspectors in labor standards, including child labor.(10, 36)

The penalties for violating child labor laws, outlined in Article 185 of the Labour Proclamation, are low and do not generally deter violations.(27, 35) Despite a higher budget for the labor inspectorate, scarce resources and an insufficient staff prevent proper enforcement of child labor laws, particularly in the agricultural sector in rural areas, at construction sites in urban areas, and at sites of domestic work.(10, 15, 35) The number of labor inspectors is insufficient for the size of Ethiopia's workforce, which includes over 49 million workers. According to the ILO's recommendation of 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, Ethiopia should employ roughly 1,232 inspectors.(15, 40, 41)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2016, criminal law enforcement agencies in Ethiopia took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (36)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (10)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (15)	Yes (10)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (10)

In 2016, the IOM, in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission, conducted anti-trafficking workshops for police at the Police University College and developed a training manual. The IOM also provided two trainings on the Anti-Trafficking Proclamation and on investigation skills for trafficking crimes for approximately 70 police, prosecutors, and judges in Harar and Dessie.(10) The OAG and the ILO held a workshop for 80 members of the media on the Anti-Trafficking Proclamation to build awareness.(19)

The UNODC provided training to about 100 police officers and judges to increase their capacity to investigate and hear trafficking cases, in addition to providing a separate training for 70 judges and prosecutors using a new virtual reality module that mimics the scene of a human trafficking crime. MOLSA, together with World Vision International, conducted two trainings for judges regarding labor laws generally, including how to spot child labor.(10, 42)

The SNNPR's Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs officials reported one case in which a trafficker was convicted of running a child begging and garbage collection ring and was sentenced to jail.(10)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinate activities on the worst forms of child labor. Members include MOLSA, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, and the Ministry of Education.(14)
MOLSA National Forum to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Combat the worst forms of child labor at the national level. Meet twice a year. Include participants from the Ethiopian Employers' Federation and Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions.(14)
National Steering Committee Against Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children	Develop action plans and coordinate activities against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.(21, 39)
National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons	Address international exploitation, including the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, with representatives from five Government ministries and regional presidents that meet twice a year.(31, 43)
National Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Task Force	Develop action plans quarterly and coordinate activities against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling through the leadership of the Office of Attorney General, with representatives from 31 government stakeholders, as well as international organizations such as the IOM, ILO, and UNODC.(19, 31) In 2016, met to review implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and harmonize national and regional structures.(10, 31, 38, 43)
Child Protection Committees, Child Rights Committees, and Orphans and Vulnerable Children Task Forces	Promote children's rights, provide children with food and school supplies, and train members on child labor issues, case management, international child labor standards, and Ethiopian child labor laws. Include children, police, health workers, and teachers.(8, 39)

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Research was unable to determine whether the National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor and the MOLSA National Forum convened during the reporting period, indicating that limited committee budgets may still affect the ability to operate and coordinate efforts to address child labor.(10, 15)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor[‡]

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2013–2016)	Includes guidelines on child labor identification, withdrawal, reintegration, and educational policies. Overseen by the National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.(8, 24) Three workshops conducted by MOLSA with other stakeholders in 2016 to deliberate on the second stage of the National Action Plan 2017–2021, currently awaiting final approval.(10)
National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2015–2020)	Examines legal and institutional frameworks and responses related to existing human trafficking. Aims to provide guiding principles based on international best practices for human anti-trafficking action and the institutional structures and inputs needed to effectively combat human trafficking.(44)
National Youth Policy	Condemns the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and illicit work through direction by the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture. Lacks a detailed and specific action plan related to preventing the worst forms of child labor.(45, 46) Government announced a new \$435 million revolving “youth fund” in 2016 to fund activities of the policy.(36, 45)
UNDAF (2016–2020) [†]	Promotes improved access to education and livelihood services for vulnerable children. Seeks to protect children from abuse, violence, and exploitation, and rehabilitate them.(47)
National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) II (2016–2020) [†]	Aims to develop a comprehensive and structured mechanism to strengthen human rights in Ethiopia, building upon NHRAP I, which included efforts to eliminate exploitative child labor. Approved in December 2016.(48, 49)

[†] 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.(10, 15, 36, 39, 46, 50-56)

The Government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Sector Development Program or the National Technical Vocational Education and Training Strategy.(57, 58)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2016, the Government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor[‡]

Program	Description
USDOL-Funded Projects to Address Child Labor	USDOL projects in Ethiopia aim to eliminate child labor, including its worst forms, through research, capacity building, and increased access to education and decent work opportunities. These projects include Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development (2013–2017), implemented in at least 10 countries by the ILO; Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues (2011–2017), implemented in approximately 40 countries by the ILO; and Engaged, Educated, Empowered, Ethiopian Youth Project (2014–2018), a \$10 million project implemented by World Vision, Inc.(59-61) For additional information about USDOL’s work, please visit our website .
Social Cash Transfer Program (2011–2017)	In partnership with UNICEF, the Government provides vulnerable populations, including child laborers, with cash transfers in the Oromia and SNNPR regions to improve school attendance and enrollment and to support children’s health in targeted districts.(62) In 2016, UNICEF support in Tigray stopped, and beneficiaries in that region are now supported by PSNP4 and the regional Tigray Government.(36)
Productive Safety Net Program Phase IV (PSNP4) [†] (2014–2020)	\$3.5 billion, 6-year project co-funded with the World Bank that includes several components, including cash and in-kind transfers to orphans and vulnerable children and households without able-bodied adults who can work. In 2016, the World Bank approved additional financing of US \$100 million to scale up safety net support to an estimated 4.5 million clients affected by the El Nino-induced drought.(36, 63, 64)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor[†] (cont)

Program	Description
Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) (2013–2016)	A tripartite (government, workers, and employers) partners-initiated program, guided by a National Steering Committee and funded by the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The program addresses country priorities identified by the constituents in collaboration with the ILO country office, which supports the integration of decent work priorities with Ethiopia's national development agenda as set out in the Growth and Transformation Plan (2015/16–2019/20) and UNDAF.(65) The program was extended through 2016 with the next generation of DWCP in development.(36)
General Education Quality Improvement Project II (2014–2018)	\$50 million World Bank-funded project, with additional donor support, that aims to improve learning conditions in Ethiopia through curriculum development, textbook assessment, teacher training, and school construction.(36, 66) In 2016, the project held a two-day national workshop on project implementation and forward planning. To date, the project has delivered more than 64 million textbooks to Ethiopian schools.(66)

[†] Program is funded by the Government of Ethiopia.

[‡] The Government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms.(3, 10, 15, 36, 55, 67-69)

Although the Government participates in and implements several programs to combat child labor, these programs do not sufficiently target sectors with high incidences of child labor, such as agriculture and domestic work.(10)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Ethiopia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age at which children may enter hazardous work following vocational training from age 14 to age 16, in line with ILO C. 138.	2009 – 2016
	Ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive.	2016
	Ensure that all children are protected by child labor laws, including children working in non-contractual employment.	2009 – 2016
	Establish by law, free basic education and an age up to which education is compulsory that is consistent with the minimum age of employment.	2012 – 2016
Enforcement	Ensure that Occupational Safety and Health Case Team (OSHCT) and Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs (BOLSA) inspectors have sufficient resources to conduct systematic inspections in all labor sectors.	2009 – 2016
	Ensure that penalties are high enough to deter child labor law violations.	2013 – 2016
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO recommendation.	2015 – 2016
	Gather and publish information on the numbers of child labor law violations found, citations issued, and penalties applied; and whether unannounced inspections are conducted.	2009 – 2016
	Enforce the Labour Proclamation by authorizing the inspectorate to determine and assess penalties when child labor law violations are found.	2013 – 2016
	Publish data on the training of investigators, number of criminal investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2016
Coordination	Ensure that the established coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor have adequate funding to operate effectively.	2015 – 2016
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Sector Development Program and the National Technical Vocational Education and Training Strategy.	2013 – 2016
	Include an action plan on the worst forms of child labor for the National Youth Policy.	2009 – 2016
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the types of activities carried out by children working in fishing to inform policies and programs.	2015 – 2016
	Increase access to education by increasing school infrastructure, especially in rural areas; eliminating school-related costs; implementing programs that protect communities from droughts and floods; addressing sexual abuse and harassment of girls in schools; providing teacher training; and increasing birth registration rates of children to ensure that they have access to services such as education.	2010 – 2016

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms (cont)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Develop social protection programs to prevent or withdraw children from agriculture and domestic work.	2009 – 2016

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