

In 2016, Liberia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government launched an awareness project to reduce the use of children for street vending in urban cities, developed a draft National Action Plan to combat the worst forms of child labor, and published data on its law enforcement efforts to address child labor. However, children in Liberia perform dangerous tasks in the production of rubber, and mining gold and diamonds. Children also engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. The Liberia National Police's Women and Children Protection Section and the National Commission on Child Labor continue to lack sufficient resources to conduct investigations and enforce child labor laws. A key gap in the legal framework is that the compulsory education age is lower than the minimum age for work by one year.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Liberia perform dangerous tasks in the production of rubber, and mining gold and diamonds.(1, 2) Children also engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work.(1, 3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Liberia.

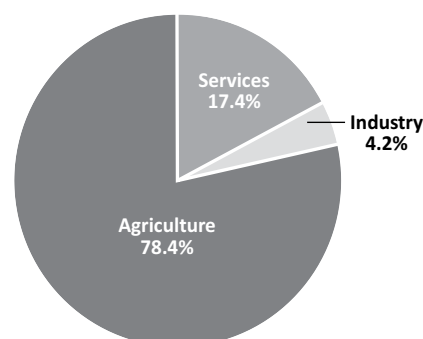
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	16.6 (136,340)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	75.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	14.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		58.8

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 Labour Force Survey, 2010.(5)

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 rubber (1-3, 6-8)
	Production of charcoal (2, 6)
	Farming activities, including production of cocoa, coffee, and cassava (6, 9-11)
Industry	Mining for diamonds† and gold† (3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13)
	Cutting and crushing stone (1, 2, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15)
	Construction, activities unknown (2, 7, 12)
Services	Domestic work (12, 14)
	Street work, including vending, begging, hawking goods, and carrying heavy loads (1, 6, 7, 16-18)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (12, 19, 20)
	Forced labor in domestic work, street vending, mining, begging, and work on rubber plantations, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3, 12, 19)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (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.

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Children trafficked within Liberia are sometimes victims of commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, forced begging, and forced labor in street vending, alluvial diamond mines, and on rubber plantations. Children are also trafficked from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.(3, 7) Research found that there is a contrast in child labor activities in rural versus urban communities.(15) Children in rural communities, like Margibi County, engage in rubber tapping and coal burning activities to a greater degree, whereas children in urban cities and surrounding communities, particularly Monrovia and the communities in Montserrado County, crush rocks near deposits.(15) The Government has yet to collect comprehensive data on child labor activities in farming and construction to inform policies and social programs.

Section 9 of the Children's Law mandates free primary education. Many schools, however, continue to charge fees or impose mandatory requirements, like uniforms and supplies, limiting access to education for some children.(6) Barriers to education that may prevent children from attending school and increase their risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor include limited or overcrowded schools and sexual abuse of girls by male teachers in schools.(11, 22-24) Liberian parents are required by law to register their infants within 14 days of birth.(25) Birth registration is technically required in order for parents to enroll their children in school. However, fewer than 5 percent of births are registered. Children who are not enrolled in school are more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.(26, 27)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Liberia 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, including its worst forms (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Liberia'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	Yes	16	Section 74 of the Labor Law (14, 28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 7, Section 9.1 of the Children's Law (29, 30)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 21.4 of the Decent Work Act (7, 31)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 12 of the Constitution; Article 2.2 of the Decent Work Act; Article 7, Section 8 of the Children's Law; Article 1, Section 5 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (29-33)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 7, Section 8 of the Children's Law; Article 1, Section 5 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (29, 33)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 3, Section 21 of the Children's Law; Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Article 1, Section 5 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (29, 31, 33)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Chapter 16 of the Penal Law (31, 34)
Minimum Age for Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (29)
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (29)
Non-state Compulsory	Yes		Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (29)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act (29, 35)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law (29)

* No conscription (36)

Children in Liberia are required to attend school only up to but not including age 15. This standard makes 15-year-old children vulnerable to child labor, because they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work until age 16. Although Section 74 of the Labor Law prohibits employment of children under age 16, the penalty of a fine of \$1.18 (100 Liberian dollars) for those who violate the law is not sufficient to deter offenders.(28)

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 and criminal 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 (MOL)	Assess penalties for child labor violations and accompany representatives of the National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL) during child labor investigations.(7, 10)
Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection	Assist the MOL with the investigation of child labor cases and act as the lead advisory agency through its Children Protection and Development Division on policy formulation, coordination, and monitoring of child protection policies. Monitor the Government's efforts regarding compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UN CRC, and the African Union protocols on women and children.(37)
Liberia National Police (LNP) Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS)	Investigate human trafficking cases involving women and children under the guidance of the LNP.(38)
LNP Anti-Trafficking Unit	Ensure that human trafficking training is integrated into police orientation. Collaborate with the WACPS to investigate human trafficking cases.(27)
Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization	Enforce the Alien and Nationality Law of Liberia and protect the border from illegal entry of migrants. Aid in combating human trafficking by detecting fraudulent immigration documents.(10)
Liberian Transnational Crime Unit	Coordinate responses to international organized criminal activities, including monitoring and prosecuting criminal violations involving arms, human, and drug trafficking.(39)
Ministry of Justice	Promote and execute the rule of law for public safety, including the prosecution of child labor perpetrators.(40)

Labor Law Enforcement

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

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (7)	Unknown* (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	39 (7)	31 (2)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (41)	Yes (41)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	N/A (7)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (7)	Yes (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (7)	Yes (2)
Number of Labor Inspections	Unknown (7)	486 (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (7)	486 (2)
Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	N/A (7)	N/A (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (7)	0 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (7)	N/A (2)
Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	N/A (2, 7)	N/A (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (7)	Yes (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (7)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (7)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (7)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (2)

*The Government does not publish this information.

In 2016, the Ministry of Labor's (MOL) budget decreased from \$1.8 million to \$1.7 million, and the amount of funding dedicated solely to the labor inspectorate remains unknown. Due to limited resources, mainly lack of transportation, the labor inspectorate's response to investigate and address suspected and reported cases of labor violations is ineffective.(2) The number of labor inspectors is insufficient for the size of Liberia's workforce, which includes more than 1.6 million workers. According to the ILO's recommendation of 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Liberia should employ roughly 110 labor inspectors. Additionally, labor inspections are mostly carried out in the formal sector.(2) For example, labor inspectors conducted unannounced inspections of construction companies and private businesses.(7)

During the year, the MOL and the National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL) trained labor inspectors on child labor and occupational safety and health.(2) Although the MOL refers suspected cases of child labor to NACOMAL, NACOMAL is responsible only for investigations, while the MOL handles the penalization of violators. NACOMAL's child labor investigations are carried out with the assistance of the MOL; the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the Liberia National Police (LNP); and three NACOMAL staff members (director, assistant director, and filing clerk).(7, 42) In 2016, it was reported that NACOMAL has no operating budget and has limited staff to carry out its child labor investigations.(2)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2016, criminal law enforcement agencies in Liberia 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 (7)	N/A (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (7)	Yes (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (7)	Yes (2)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (7)	162 (2)

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Number of Violations Found	0 (7)	128 (2)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (7)	0 (2)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (7)	0 (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (7)

The WACPS reported having limited resources to conduct investigations, including a lack of vehicles, fuel, sufficient training, finances, communications equipment, and investigative equipment.(7, 43) The LNP refers child endangerment cases for prosecution to the Ministry of Justice. The data for child endangerment cases prosecuted through the Ministry of Justice are not disaggregated to determine the number involving child labor violations.(2, 7) Although 128 violations were found, there were no prosecutions because violations were addressed through corrective measures or conferences.(44)

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
NACOMAL	Lead child labor investigations and oversee the coordination of efforts to combat child labor. Led by the MOL and composed of representatives from 16 organizations, including international and civil society organizations.(45) Objectives include reforming national child labor laws and creating a national child labor database to assist with conducting surveys to determine the magnitude of the child labor issue in the country.(45)
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Implement child labor policies. Chaired by the MOL and composed of government officials and workers' organizations.(7) Includes four subcommittees on resource mobilization, advocacy, training and legal development, and monitoring and evaluation. Met quarterly during the reporting period.(42, 46) Conducted two trainings during the reporting period that focused on international child labor definitions and developing goals for the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.(41)
Child Protection Network	Coordinate child protection efforts through monthly meetings to discuss child protection issues, including child labor and human trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development, and composed of the MOL, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the WACPS, civil society organizations, and several NGOs.(12) Also responsible for coordinating referrals of child victims of abuse to social services providers, with support from international and national organizations.(10, 14) Met during the reporting period.(44)
Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force	Coordinate anti-human trafficking activities. Chaired by the MOL and includes the Commissioner of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization; the LNP; and representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Internal Affairs.(38) During the year, the task force provided shelter to trafficking victims. Investigated cases of trafficking in persons (TIP), and set up a hotline to receive suspected reports of TIP.(44)

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 for Trafficking in Persons	Outlines the Government's anti-human trafficking efforts, including those for child victims.(10) Research could not find information about accomplishments during the year.(41)
Direct Assistance and Support to Trafficked Victims Standard Operation Procedures	Establishes roles and responsibilities for coordinating government assistance to human trafficking victims. (27) Provides shelter and care to children who were suspected TIP victims.(41)
National Social Welfare Policy	Prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that target children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.(47)

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In 2016, the Government developed a draft National Action Plan on Child Labor.(2) The Government reviewed the National Strategy for Child Survival but did not renew it during the year, and also failed to renew the National Health Policy. In addition, the Government failed to include child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the following: Revised National Youth Policy, National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan, Education Sector Plan, Rubber Industry Master Plan, and the National Employment Policy.(48-55)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2016, the Government 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
Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaign†	Government of Liberia program led by the MOL that uses radio and billboard messages to raise public awareness on human trafficking.(11, 27) Campaign continued during the reporting period.(44)
USDOL-Funded Projects to Combat Child Labor	<u>Actions to Reduce Child Labor in Areas of Rubber Production</u> (2012–2017); \$6.2 million project implemented by Winrock International to combat child labor in the rubber sector. Provided 3,700 households with livelihood services and 10,126 children with education services. <u>Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues</u> (2011–2017); \$15.9 million project implemented by the ILO that aims to build the capacity of the national government and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor and forced labor in Liberia. <u>County Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor (CLEAR) II</u> (2016–2018), implemented by the ILO to build the capacity of the government to address child labor.(2, 56, 57) Additional information is available on the USDOL Web site .
U.S. Government-Funded Projects on Education for Adolescent Girls	U.S. Government-funded projects that aim to improve access to education and improve child protection. Includes New Accelerated Quality Education Activity (2016–2019),* \$33.9 million USAID-funded project implemented by the Education Development Center; Providing Support for the Education of Girls with Disabilities, implemented by USAID with partnership and support from Liberia’s Ministry of Education; Increasing Support for Out-of-School Girls and Youth, implemented by USAID; Advancing Youth Program, implemented by the Education Development Center; McGovern-Dole International Food For Education and Child Nutrition Program; Girls Leading Our World Camps (2014–2017), implemented by the Peace Corps.(58-60) Through programs of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, female high school students participate in short- and long-term exchanges to promote education, empowerment, and leadership skills. In 2016, more than 1,500 adolescent girls participated in public outreach programs.(41)

* Program was launched during the year.

† 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, including its worst forms.(58, 61-68)

During the year, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, in collaboration with the Child Protection Network and the Liberia Children Representative Forum, launched an awareness project to remove children, especially those in Monrovia, from street work.(69) Although the Government funds social programs, they are not sufficient to address the child labor problem.

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 Liberia (Table 11).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2016
	Ensure that penalties for employing children under the minimum age for work are stringent to deter violations.	2014 – 2016
	Raise the compulsory education age to be consistent with the minimum age for employment.	2016

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish information about the labor inspectorate's funding to conduct inspections and fulfill its enforcement duties.	2016
	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted in the informal sector in which children are found working.	2016
	Ensure adequate funding for child labor enforcement mechanisms and prosecution efforts, such as the MOL, the WACPS, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, and provide necessary training for such officials to enforce child labor laws.	2010 – 2016
	Disaggregate the number of complaints and report on the number of child labor cases received.	2016
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing health, education, and youth policies.	2010 – 2016
	Renew or develop policies that improve youth literacy rates and that improve the health care delivery system, such as the National Strategy for Child Survival and the National Health Policy.	2015 – 2016
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in farming and construction to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2016
	Improve access to education by subsidizing the cost of school fees and reduce barriers to education by building additional schools, addressing sexual abuse in schools, and ensuring that children are registered at birth.	2012 – 2016
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem.	2009 – 2016

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