

In 2017, Mauritania made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the year, the Government of Mauritania drafted a new General Child Protection Code that will expand the number of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children and increase the penalties to deter violators of child labor laws. The government also continued to fund and participate in multiple programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including by expanding a cash transfer program to assist 38,000 vulnerable households and participating in a new program that aims to improve enforcement of child labor laws. Despite these initiatives, Mauritania is receiving this assessment because it implemented a new practice and continued to implement a policy that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, criminal law enforcement authorities did not make adequate efforts to combat slavery and its vestiges. Specifically, the government did not adequately prosecute or secure convictions in slavery cases, and reports continue to indicate that some government actors, including police and judicial authorities, are unwilling to pursue such cases. In addition, since 2011, the Government of Mauritania has required proof of marriage and biological parents' citizenship 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. Children in Mauritania engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery, and in agriculture. The government did not make adequate efforts to enforce some laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including on hereditary slavery and forced begging, and to raise awareness of laws that prohibit slavery. Financial resource constraints severely limited the relevant government agencies' ability to fully implement its policies and social programs to combat the worst forms of child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.



In addition, since 2011, the Government of Mauritania has required proof of marriage and biological parents' citizenship 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. Children in Mauritania engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery, and in agriculture. The government did not make adequate efforts to enforce some laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including on hereditary slavery and forced begging, and to raise awareness of laws that prohibit slavery. Financial resource constraints severely limited the relevant government agencies' ability to fully implement its policies and social programs to combat the worst forms of child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritania engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in herding cattle and goats. (7; 1; 8; 9) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritania.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|-------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| Working (% and population) | 5 to 14 | 12.5 (131,552) |
| Attending School (%) | 5 to 14 | 53.5 |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7 to 14 | 8.2 |
| Primary Completion Rate (%) | | 59.3 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (10)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 4), 2011. (11)

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 | Herding and caring for cattle, camels, goats, and sheep (7; 1; 8; 9; 12; 13; 6) |
| | Fishing, catching shrimp and fish (1; 8; 9; 12; 13) |
| Industry | Crushing gravel (14; 13) |
| Services | Domestic work† (7; 1; 8; 9; 15; 16) |
| | Working as car mechanics, painters, and carpenters (1; 8; 9; 12) |
| | Garbage scavenging (1; 9; 12) |
| | Street work, including vending, shoe shinning, begging,† and in the transportation sector (1; 8; 9; 12; 13) |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Forced begging as a result of criminal gang recruitment and coercion by Koranic teachers (1; 8; 16; 17; 2) |
| | Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9; 15; 2) |
| | Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (9; 12; 2) |
| | Indentured and hereditary slavery (1; 15; 18; 19; 3; 4; 20; 5; 6) |
| | Forced labor in domestic work and as camel jockeys, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8; 21; 12; 5; 2) |

† 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. Some children are born into slavery, while others 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; 18; 22; 23; 18; 20; 5; 2; 8) Child slaves herd animals, such as cattle and goats; perform domestic labor; and are often sexually exploited. (14; 15; 2; 5; 24)

In Mauritania, it is a traditional practice to send children to Koranic teachers to receive an education. However, some Koranic teachers (*marabouts*) force their students (*talibés*) to beg on the streets for long hours and to surrender the money they have earned. (7; 8; 9; 17; 2)

Since 2011, the Government of Mauritania has required proof of marriage and biological parents’ citizenship to obtain a birth certificate. (25; 26) As a result, children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including from families of slave descent, have been prevented from being registered at birth. Because birth certificates are required to enroll in secondary school in Mauritania, many children as young as age 12 could not access education, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (9; 17; 22; 23; 27; 12; 28; 6; 26) In addition, the lack of school infrastructure and limited availability of teachers, especially in rural areas, impede access to education, which may increase children’s vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (18; 29; 30; 31) Children from families of slave descent, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, also face barriers to accessing education due to ethnic discrimination. (7; 32; 22; 20; 6)

In 2017, Mauritania hosted approximately 50,000 Malian refugees. (33) Refugee children may have difficulty accessing education, which makes them particularly vulnerable to engaging in the worst forms of child labor, including being recruited by non-state armed groups. (34; 12; 2; 28; 33)

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 | ✓ |

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 related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mauritania's legal framework to adequately protect children from 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: Yes/No | Age | Legislation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 14 | Article 153 of the Labor Code (35) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Article 247 of the Labor Code (35) |
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | No | | |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes | | Law 052/15; Articles 1 and 3–4 of Law 025/2003; Article 1 of Law 2013-011 (36; 37; 38) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes | | Articles 1 and 3 of Law 025/2003; Article 54 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (39; 36) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes | | Article 1 of Law 025/2003; Articles 24–26 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (39; 36) |
| 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; Article 42 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (40; 39) |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment | | | |
| State Compulsory | N/A* | | |
| State Voluntary | Yes | 18 | Article 7 of Law 62132/1962 (41; 42) |
| Non-state | Yes | 18 | Article 43 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (39) |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 14 | Article 1 of Law 2001-054 (43; 44) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Article 1 of Law 2001-054 (43) |

* No conscription (42)

In December 2017, the government drafted a new General Child Protection Code, a step to bringing Mauritanian law into compliance with the UN CRC and international labor standards. (45; 12) The draft Code aims to set the minimum age for work at 16 and prohibit employment of children under age 18 in hazardous activities, including work that exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools; and work in unhealthy environments, which may expose children to hazardous substances or temperatures. The draft Code will increase the penalties associated with violations of child labor laws up to \$4,200, and criminalize commercial sexual exploitation of children. (46; 12; 45) However, the Code was not adopted during the reporting period. (47; 48)

The Labor Code allows children between ages 12 and 14 to perform light work, as long as it does not impede their school attendance, exceed 2 hours of work per day, and is authorized by the Ministry of Labor. (35) However, the Labor Code does not specify the activities in which light work may be permitted. (49) In addition, the country has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (14; 32; 49)

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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 the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

| Organization/Agency | Role |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ministry of Labor's Directorate of Labor and Inspection | Enforce labor laws and investigate Labor Code infractions, including violations related to minimum wage and hazardous work. (32; 16; 50) |
| Ministry of the Interior's Special Brigade for Minors | Investigate crimes against children, including human trafficking, and monitor religious schools (<i>mahadras</i>) to ensure that children are not forced to beg on behalf of their teachers. Mainly operates in Nouakchott. (9; 32; 16; 51; 52) |
| Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family (MASEF) Office of Childhood | Develop and implement programs to protect vulnerable children and monitor alleged violations of child labor laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Manage the Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children. (9; 16; 50) In 2017, the MASEF received an operating budget of \$582,000. (12) |
| Ministry of Justice's Directorate of the Judiciary for the Protection of Children | Coordinate child protection issues and oversee the Special Brigade for Minors and tribunals that sentence child offenders. (14; 16; 51) |
| National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) | Advocate for the eradication of slavery, receive human rights complaints, and conduct investigations on human rights violations, including the worst forms of child labor. Independent ombudsman body. (9; 16; 53; 50; 32) |
| Commissariat on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action (CDHAH) | Coordinate the development and implementation of government policies related to human rights, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Carry out awareness-raising campaigns to combat slavery and human trafficking. Semi-autonomous body, under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister. (50; 54; 32) |
| National Agency to Fight Against the Vestiges of Slavery, Integration, and Fight Against Poverty (<i>Tadamoun</i>) | Develop and implement programs to tackle poverty, promote the integration of refugees, and rehabilitate former slaves. (55; 56; 18; 50; 57) File complaints on behalf of citizens who accuse their employers of practicing slavery, and bring cases of alleged slavery to the authorities for investigation. (53; 4; 2; 58) |
| Anti-Slavery Courts | Prosecute crimes related to slavery and provide free legal assistance to victims, including children. The three regional courts located in Nema, Nouakchott, and Nouadhibou were created under the Roadmap and Action Plan for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery. (59; 2; 60; 61) |

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Mauritania took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

| Overview of Labor Law Enforcement | 2016 | 2017 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Labor Inspectorate Funding | \$33,300 (14) | \$33,300 (12) |
| Number of Labor Inspectors | 67 (14) | 86 (52) |
| Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties | Yes (12; 62) | Yes (12; 62) |
| Training for Labor Inspectors | | |
| Initial Training for New Employees | Yes (14) | Yes (12) |
| Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor | N/A (14) | N/A (12) |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Yes (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Number of Labor Inspections Conducted | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Number Conducted at Worksites | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (cont)

| Overview of Labor Law Enforcement | 2016 | 2017 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Routine Inspections Conducted | No (14) | No (12) |
| Routine Inspections Targeted | No (63) | N/A (12) |
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted | Yes (64) | Yes (12) |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted | Yes (64) | Unknown (12) |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists | Yes (65) | Yes (12) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | Yes (65) | Yes (12) |

In 2017, the Ministry of Labor employed 86 full-time labor inspectors and 20 full-time labor controllers, who enforce labor laws, including those related to child labor, in 13 regional offices. However, reports indicate that the Ministry of Labor lacked equipment, training, transportation, and funding to conduct child labor inspections, especially in remote locations and in the informal sector, which employs more than 40 percent of the workforce. (16; 31; 66; 12; 67; 50; 52; 68; 48) In addition, the penalties established for violating child labor laws are insufficient and do not generally deter violations. (14; 32)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritania took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including investigating and prosecuting criminal cases related to hereditary slavery and forced child begging.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement | 2016 | 2017 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Training for Investigators | | |
| Initial Training for New Employees | Yes (64) | Yes (12) |
| Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor | No (63) | Yes (12) |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Yes (69) | Yes (12) |
| Number of Investigations | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Number of Violations Found | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Number of Convictions | Unknown (14) | Unknown (12) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | Yes (64) | Yes (12) |

During the reporting period, the Special Brigade for Minors employed 30 officers and received training on laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking in persons. (52; 12) In November 2017, the Mauritanian police, in collaboration with Interpol, conducted an operation in Nouakchott that rescued 42 child victims of forced begging and arrested the Koranic teachers (*marabouts*) associated with this crime. (70; 71; 72) Despite this effort, the Prosecutor of the District Court of Nouakchott West did not press charges against the *marabouts* for this crime, and instead entered into an agreement to return the children to their *marabouts* with the condition of ensuring their health and safety and keeping the children from begging in the streets. However, evidence suggests that these children are reportedly once again begging on the streets despite the signed agreement between the *marabouts* and the prosecutor. (70)

Efforts made by criminal law enforcement authorities to combat the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery, remained inadequate given the magnitude of the problem. (2) In 2017, the Special Brigade for Minors investigated 406 cases of child exploitation, 274 of which were referred to the Ministry of Justice for trial. However, research could not determine how many of these cases involved child labor, led to convictions, or whether the victims were removed from their exploitative situations and provided with social services. (52) In addition, although the police identified more than 600 cases of child slavery and forced begging in 2016, it is unclear whether the government investigated these cases or assisted victims. (2) As of the end of the reporting period, there were a total of 58 slavery cases in the Mauritanian judicial system, some of which were submitted by civil society in 2016. (2; 73) The Ministry of Justice transferred 13 of these cases to the Anti-Slavery Courts; however, the status of the 45 remaining cases is unknown. (73; 74)

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In March 2018, the Anti-Slavery Court of Nouadhibou secured two separate convictions for slavery crimes, including child slavery. In one case, two offenders were sentenced to 20 years imprisonment and ordered to pay restitution of about \$14,500 to the victims; however, neither of the offenders has been imprisoned—one died prior to the conviction date and the other fled prosecution prior to the trial and was tried in absentia. (47) In the second case, one individual was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and ordered to pay restitution to the victims of about \$7,000; however, the offender, alleging health concerns, was granted a compassionate provisional release from imprisonment on June 2018. (75; 76; 47; 77) In addition, during the reporting period, the Ministry of Justice issued three decrees establishing procedural protocols to improve and expedite the investigative and prosecutorial efforts on criminal cases related to hereditary slavery. (78; 79)

Research could not determine whether the National Agency to Fight Against the Vestiges of Slavery, Integration, and Fight Against Poverty (*Tadamoun*) submitted new complaints of slavery on behalf of victims during 2017, although it remained a civil party to 13 slavery cases. (80; 74; 81) According to the 2015 anti-slavery law, other than *Tadamoun*, the only other entities that can file criminal cases on behalf of former slaves are legally registered human rights associations that have been operating for 5 years. The government continued to prevent the registration of some anti-slavery organizations and associations that work for the promotion and protection of human rights of the Haratine ethnic minority and former slave groups that would have been able to submit complaints once their five year wait had passed. (82; 83; 84). Additionally, two laws adopted by the National Assembly and pending signature of the President have drawn widespread concern in the international community. If enacted, the anti-discrimination law and the law on apostasy-related crimes may be used to retaliate against anti-slavery organizations and restrict their ability to function, negatively affecting their ability to file criminal cases or advocate for the end of slavery (85; 86; 87; 88; 82; 83; 89)

Although the government has released 11 of the 13 members of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA) who were arrested in June 2016 for their alleged participation in a Nouakchott riot and membership in the unregistered organization, 2 remain in prison. Some of the freed IRA members claimed that they were tortured while they were in police custody. (2; 84) The government's continued imprisonment of the remaining two IRA members may limit its ability to address this issue comprehensively. (66; 5; 90)

In a 2017 decision, the African Union's Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child stated that the government failed to enforce its prohibition on slavery and slavery-like practices for the two cases of child slavery that were submitted to the Court for review in 2015. (6) Evidence suggests that some police, prosecutors, and judges do not investigate cases of slavery once complaints are received, and additionally that the government has prosecuted cases for lesser offenses to avoid bringing a slavery case to trial, in part due to misunderstanding of the 2015 Anti-Slavery Law or allegations of corruption. (2; 69) Enforcement authorities, including the Anti-Slavery Courts, lack personnel, funding, and training to adequately coordinate and enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (59; 66; 12; 2; 5; 61; 91; 6)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. (Table 8)

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

| Coordinating Body | Role and Description |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Inter-ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights | Coordinate and monitor government efforts to promote human rights in Mauritania, including those related to the UN CRC. Led by the Office of the Prime Minister and includes representatives from the <i>Tadamoun</i> , the CNDH, and other ministries. (92; 50; 4; 93) In 2017, collaborated with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to start the process to evaluate the implementation of the Roadmap and Action Plan for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery. (50; 3; 94) |

Research suggests that the lack of inclusion of relevant civil society groups, including worker and employer organizations, hampers the effectiveness of the Inter-ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights' ability to carry out efforts to promote human rights, including combating slavery and its vestiges. (50; 3; 59)

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 funding and implementation of key policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

| Policy | Description |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor (PANETE-RIM) (2015–2020) | Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by strengthening child labor laws, training relevant government officials, implementing awareness-raising campaigns, and mobilizing funds for social programs to withdraw children from child labor. Overseen by the Ministry of Labor. (1; 8; 12; 50) In 2017, with the assistance of the ILO, organized workshops and awareness-raising campaigns to build the capacity of relevant government and non-governmental actors to combat child labor. (95; 96; 12) |
| Roadmap and Action Plan for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery (2014–2017) | Aimed to combat slavery and its vestiges by revising slavery laws and policies, strengthening enforcement bodies, conducting awareness-raising campaigns, and implementing programs that provide former slaves with access to education and livelihood opportunities. Overseen by the Inter-ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights. (29; 93; 97; 3; 4) In 2017, organized workshops to start the process of developing a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of the Roadmap and identify new areas for intervention. (94) |
| United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2012–2017) | Promoted improved access to education for vulnerable children and aimed to build the capacity of the government to address child labor. Overseen by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development. (31; 98) In 2017, started the planning process to adopt a new 4-year framework. (98) |
| Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development (2017–2030)† | Aims to reduce poverty, promote sustainable development, and increase access to fundamental social services. Overseen by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development. (99; 100) 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. (99) |

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

The First Lady of Mauritania, along with other leading figures, made a declaration in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on child protection, including child trafficking, exploitation, child labor, and all other forms of violence against children. (101; 102)

Although the government drafted a new National Child Protection Strategy in 2017, it was not approved by the end of the reporting period. (103) In addition, the government did not officially adopt the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons that was drafted in 2015. (104; 2; 94) Reports indicate that efforts to implement most of the key policies related to child labor, particularly the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor, have been slowed due to insufficient allocation of resources. (9; 29; 66; 12; 62)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, 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 efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

| Program | Description |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| From Protocol to Practice: A Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labor (2015–2019) | USDOL-funded global project implemented by ILO to support global and national efforts aimed at combating the forced labor of adults and children under the 2014 ILO Protocol and supporting the Recommendation to C. 29 on Forced Labor. (105; 106) In 2017, conducted workshops with government officials and journalists to raise awareness of forced labor and slavery-like practices. (94) Additional information is available on the USDOL website. |
| Technical Support on Social Dialogue and Labor Administration (2017–2018)* | \$328,000 ILO-funded project to build the capacity of the Ministry of Labor to improve enforcement of labor laws, including those related to child labor. In 2017, conducted a workshop on combating child labor for law enforcement agencies in Nouadhibou, Kiffa, and Rosso, and launched a website to raise awareness of child labor in Mauritania. (107) |
| Cash Transfer <i>Tekavoul</i> (2015–2020) | \$29 million <i>Tadamoun</i> program, supported by the World Bank, that provides cash assistance to families with school-age children, conditioned on children's school attendance. (108) In 2017, expanded the program to new geographic areas that will benefit 38,000 households. (18; 109; 58) |

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

| Program | Description |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Program to Eradicate the Effects of Slavery† | Government program that supports the reintegration and rehabilitation of former slaves. In 2017, built schools and implemented income-generating activities for at-risk youth from slave descent. (58; 2) |
| Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children† | MASEF-operated program that provides food, shelter, education, and vocational training to vulnerable children, many of whom are <i>talibés</i> . Operates in Aleg, Kaedi, Kiffa, Nouadhibou, Rosso, and Nouakchott. (9; 16; 31) In 2017, the government provided a budget of \$100,000 to manage the centers, which allowed them to provide services to 305 children. (9; 16; 31; 2; 80) |
| Access to Justice and Human Rights Program | USDOS- and USAID-funded program implemented by the American Bar Association to promote the social and political rights of marginalized groups, including former and current child victims of slavery. In 2017, trained community-based paralegals on how to help undocumented individuals obtain identity documents, including birth certificates. (110; 111; 80) |
| Countering Trafficking in Persons (2015–2017) | \$425,000 Government of Germany-funded, 2-year project implemented by IOM to raise awareness of human trafficking among vulnerable communities and build the capacity of government actors to enforce laws related to trafficking in persons. In 2017, conducted awareness-raising activities on child trafficking. (112; 113) |
| Decent Work for Migrant Youth in the Fishing Sector (2017–2019)* | \$17 million ILO- and Government of Germany-funded, 2-year project that aims to promote decent work among migrant youth working in the artisanal fishing sector in Mauritania. Aims to reach at least 9,000 recipients by the second year of the project and conduct an analysis of child labor in the fishing sector. (114; 115) |
| UNICEF Country Program (2012–2017) | \$13.3 million UNICEF-funded program that supported the government’s efforts to improve education, birth registration rates, social inclusion, and protection for children, including refugees. In 2017, provided access to education for 5,800 children and reached 1,000 children living in the Mberra refugee camp. (14; 116; 117) |
| Basic Education Sector Support Project (2014–2017) | \$12.4 million World Bank-funded project that aimed to increase access to quality basic and secondary education, particularly for girls. In 2017, built and furnished 13 middle schools in remote areas and conducted awareness-raising campaigns to promote girls’ education in six regional departments. (118; 119) |

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritania.

Although Mauritania has social programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially in agriculture, herding, and domestic work, and for children in hereditary and indentured slavery. (14; 63; 50) Moreover, some government officials do not acknowledge that slavery continues to exist. (23; 66; 3; 5; 50) In addition, the lack of recent data on slavery limits the government’s ability to develop effective social programs to comprehensively address this issue. Existing social programs for former slaves and awareness of the national laws on slavery are insufficient. (7; 23; 4; 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 Mauritania (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Legal Framework | Ensure that the law’s provisions on light work are specific enough to prevent children from being involved in child labor. | 2015 – 2017 |
| | Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers’ and workers’ organizations. | 2009 – 2017 |
| Enforcement | Increase the personnel, training, and resources for labor and criminal law enforcement agencies, including the Anti-Slavery Courts, to adequately enforce child labor laws, especially in remote areas and in the informal sector. | 2010 – 2017 |
| | Strengthen the labor inspection system by initiating routine and targeted inspections, rather than performing inspections solely based on complaints received. | 2014 – 2017 |
| | Increase efforts to ensure that cases of the worst forms of child labor, including forced begging and hereditary slavery, are investigated and prosecuted in accordance with the law. | 2016 – 2017 |
| | Publish information on the number of labor inspections, child labor law violations, and penalties assessed, and the number of criminal investigations, violations found, prosecutions, and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor. | 2011 – 2017 |

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont)

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Enforcement | Legally recognize civil society organizations that work to protect the human rights of the Haratine ethnic minority and former slave groups, in particular those that assist victims of slavery in filing cases, register births, and ensure access to education, and ensure that pending legislation is not used to impair their ability to function. | 2017 |
| | Ensure that <i>Tadamoun</i> pursues its mandate to submit complaints of slavery on behalf of victims. | 2017 |
| | Hold government officials accountable for alleged corruption and mishandling of legal cases related to crimes on the worst forms of child labor, including on forced begging and slavery offenses. | 2017 |
| | Take steps to ensure the safety of anti-slavery activists, as well as their rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. | 2011 – 2017 |
| | Ensure that penalties are high enough to deter violators of child labor laws. | 2015 – 2017 |
| Coordination | Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat child labor. | 2017 |
| | Ensure that relevant civil society organizations are included in the Inter-ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights. | 2017 |
| Government Policies | Ensure that key policies related to child labor, particularly the PANETE-RIM, receive sufficient funds for effective implementation. | 2016 – 2017 |
| | Approve the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. | 2015 – 2017 |
| Social Programs | Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including those from families of slave descent and refugees, by increasing school infrastructure and teacher availability, especially in rural areas. | 2011 – 2017 |
| | Ensure that all children are able to obtain birth certificates to increase their access to secondary education and reduce their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. | 2016 – 2017 |
| | Expand the scope of programs to address child labor, including in agriculture, herding, and domestic work, and the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary and indentured slavery. | 2009 – 2017 |
| | Implement a continuous awareness-raising program for government officials on the laws related to slavery and the worst forms of child labor. | 2012 – 2017 |
| | Conduct research and collect data on slavery to develop effective policies and programs that identify and protect children who are at risk. | 2010 – 2017 |
| | Increase funding for social programs that provide services to former slaves. | 2015 – 2017 |

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