

In 2017, Tunisia made a significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed the Law on Specific Measures for the Consecration of the Obligation of Access to Initial Vocational Training that obligates children who have dropped out of school to attend vocational training and imposes monetary penalties on their non-cooperative guardians. As part of its Child Labor National Action Plan, the government conducted a national child labor survey and released preliminary results, which indicated that nearly 8 percent of all children engaged in child labor, roughly 63 percent of whom were engaged in hazardous work. Regarding enforcement, trainings were held for juvenile and family court judges with five sessions to train judges on the implementation of the 2016 Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons. Also, the government took steps to increase the budget of the Labor Inspectorate over the previous year by 37 percent. However, children in Tunisia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and street work. The number of children dropping out of school, which may make them more vulnerable to child labor, remains high. In addition, the law's minimum age protections do not apply to children who are engaged in work in the informal sector.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Tunisia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and street work. (1; 2; 3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Tunisia.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.0 (50,364)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	2.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		103.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (4)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2011–2012. (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	Farming, activities unknown (6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown (11; 12)
Services	Domestic work (13; 7; 14; 9; 12) Street work, including shining shoes, begging, vending, auto washing and repairing, and scavenging garbage† (6; 7; 8; 15; 9; 10; 12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking (13; 8; 16; 17) Use in illicit activities, including stealing, smuggling, and drug trafficking (13; 8; 15; 16) Forced labor in domestic work and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (13; 8; 16; 18; 10; 19)

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

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

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Children are engaged in child labor in the informal sector, predominantly in street work, including vending and garbage scavenging. (20; 15) Child migrants from sub-Saharan countries and those fleeing conflict in Libya and Syria, as well as young girls from Tunisia's northwest region, are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. (16; 19) Preliminary results from the National Child Labor Survey conducted by the government indicated that 7.9 percent of all children are engaged in child labor, with 63.2 percent of whom involved in hazardous work. The northwest region—consisting of the governorates of Béja, Jendouba, Kef, and Siliana—noted the highest incidence of child labor at 27.7 percent. (12) The government has not yet made the full dataset from this survey publicly available, or allowed other government agencies to access it, leaving the nature and causes of children's involvement in specific forms of child labor unknown.

Students face barriers to education, especially in rural areas, due to inadequate transportation, household poverty, and religious customs. (6; 8; 14; 21; 10) It is estimated that each year approximately 100,000 students, including a disproportionate number of girls, drop out, many as a result of physical violence in schools. (9; 22; 23; 10)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

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

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

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 53 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Law on the Situation of Domestic Workers (24; 25)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 58 of the Labor Code (24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of the Ministry of Social Affairs Order of January 19, 2000 (26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 105 and 250 of the Penal Code; Articles 2.1, 2.5, 2.6, and 8 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (27; 28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2–3, 5, 8, and 23 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 226 bis and 232–234 of the Penal Code; Article 25 of the Child Protection Code; Article 2.7 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (27; 28; 29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 5 and 11 of Law No. 92.52 on Narcotics (30)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes	20	Article 2 of the National Service Law (31)
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 2 of the National Service Law (31)
Non-state	Yes	18	Article 2(5) of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons; Articles 3 and 18 of the Child Protection Code (28; 29)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 1 of the Law on Education (32)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 38 of the Constitution (33)

In 2017, Tunisia passed the Law on Specific Measures for the Consecration of the Obligation of Access to Initial Vocational Training that obligates children who have dropped out of school to attend vocational training with corresponding penalties for non-cooperative guardians of the child. Remedial courses are offered to those under age 15 to meet the ninth grade requirement to attend vocational training. (10; 34; 11; 35)

The Elimination of Violence Against Women law amended sections of the Penal Code to increase penalties for violence against female children. (36) Also, in 2017, Tunisia became the first non-european country to sign the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention on the protection of children against exploitation and sexual abuse. (37; 11; 19) The types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover street work, an activity in which there is evidence of children working in an unhealthy environment. Further, the government acknowledges, as evident from the high rates of recidivism, that the fines and penalties for child labor law violations are not dissuasive. (38)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

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

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA)	Conduct labor inspections and assess fines and penalties for infractions. (8; 24; 39) Maintain a database of human trafficking victims and work with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to ensure that victims of human trafficking are not prosecuted for trafficking crimes. (40) Collaborate with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) to identify and provide support to children vulnerable to child labor. (8; 20; 17; 41; 10)
Ministry of Women, Family, and Childhood (MWFC)	Through its Delegates for the Protection of Children, gather evidence and conduct investigations on child welfare cases, conduct needs assessments and intervention plans, and act as judicial police in cases of imminent danger to children. (41; 29; 10)
Ministry of the Interior (MOI)	Investigate reports of child labor as a criminal violation, including complaints that are outside of the Labor Inspectorate's mandate and complaints in the informal sector. (15) Through its Child Protection Service in the National Police, address the commercial sexual exploitation of children and coordinate with the MSA and the MWFC regarding violations. (8; 42; 10) Through its Judicial Police, coordinate with the MSA to refer cases of at-risk youth. (8; 41; 38; 43)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Coordinate anti-trafficking efforts and the criminal enforcement of child labor laws. (17)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Tunisia took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the MSA that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of ability to enforce the minimum age protections for children on inhabited premises, such as private homes, without permission of the property owner or a court order.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$5,425,994 (8)	\$7,450,000 (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	357 (8)	348 (11)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (8)	Yes (11; 35)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (38)	N/A (11)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (11; 35)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	19,913 (44)	13,708 (11)
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown (8)	13,708 (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	140 (44)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	6 (44)	1 (11)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	6 (44)	1 (11)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (11; 35)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (38; 44)	Yes (11)

In 2017, the government increased the budget of the Labor Inspectorate by 37 percent over the previous year. (11) However, the government also noted that the budget for fuel and transportation was inadequate to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of the country. (45; 11)

Mechanisms do not exist to enforce the minimum age protections for children on inhabited premises, such as private homes, without permission of the property owner or a court order. (8; 24; 10)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Tunisia 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 the lack of publication of the number of investigations conducted, violations found, prosecutions initiated, and convictions of criminal law enforcement efforts related to child labor.

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	No (41)	Yes (11)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (8)	Yes (11)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (41)	Yes (11)
Number of Investigations	292 (44)	13 (46)
Number of Violations Found	292 (44)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	5 (44)	4 (46)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (8)	1 (46)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8; 38)	Yes (11)

In 2017, the IOM, in partnership with the government, conducted trainings for civil society and professionals on human trafficking. (2) Trainings were held for juvenile and family court judges, with five specific sessions focused on the implementation of the 2016 Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons. (11)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

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
National Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Child Labor National Action Plan (PAN-TN)	Coordinate efforts to combat child labor. Led by MSA, includes membership of five other ministries and two unions, with support from ILO. (15; 47; 48; 49)
National Commission on Trafficking in Persons	Coordinate anti-human trafficking efforts and raise awareness of human trafficking issues. Includes membership of 12 ministries, 2 members of civil society, 1 media representative, and 1 member of the National Commission of Human Rights. (17; 41; 50; 51) In 2017, the MOJ appointed an individual from the Judges Union to lead the commission as president and organized a workshop to gain feedback from civil society and international organizations on the nascent anti-trafficking strategy still in draft. (3; 11; 35; 19)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Child Labor National Action Plan (PAN-TN) (2015–2020)	Aims to raise awareness, build the capacity of stakeholders, and encourage action from NGOs and the public. (15; 42; 47) In 2017, the plan continued implementing social programs such as the National Child Labor Survey as part of its objective to increase the knowledge base about child labor. (11; 19)
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2015–2017)	Aims to build the capacity of civil society to address human trafficking; boost public awareness of human trafficking; and train police, customs, and penitentiary officials to identify victims of human trafficking. (40; 52) In 2017, conducted awareness-raising activities. (35)
UNICEF Country Program Document (2015–2019)	Aims to decrease dropout rates and improve education quality and access to early education, teach life skills to adolescents, and improve access to information to protect children against violence and economic exploitation. (53; 54) In 2017, supported regional and national consultations on “Investing in Children” through policy dialogue and advocacy with the government and partners to promote child-sensitive social protection mechanisms and secure government commitments to model a child allowance scheme. (35)

During the reporting period, the National Commission on Trafficking in Persons continued work on a national strategy against human trafficking in Tunisia, but the strategy has not yet been finalized. (41; 55; 19)

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 programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor†

Program	Description
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL projects in Tunisia aim to conduct research on child labor and strengthen Tunisia’s ability to implement its Child Labor National Action Plan, a multi-stakeholder effort involving government, business, and civil society. These projects include PROTECTE (2016–2020),* \$3 million project implemented by the ILO; and Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development (MAP), \$7 million project implemented in at least 10 countries by the ILO. (8; 15; 56; 57; 58) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Support Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking (2014–2017)	USDOS-funded project implemented by the IOM to carry out anti-human trafficking activities in collaboration with the MOJ, MOI, MSA, and MWFC. Includes three objectives: (a) build the capacity of relevant institutions and agencies to identify and assist victims of trafficking based on their individual needs, (b) strengthen cross-sector cooperation and the sharing of information through the implementation of a national referral mechanism, and (c) conduct an awareness-raising campaign to keep children in school and discourage illegal migration that could lead to human trafficking. (42) In 2017, the program continued to support capacity-building efforts related to the recent anti-trafficking law with the training of 332 public officers and civil society organizations, the development and dissemination of a manual on the anti-trafficking law, and the production of awareness-raising materials on the law. (35)

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

Program	Description
Shelters and Services for Victims of Human Trafficking†	The Government of Tunisia operates shelters to serve victims of human trafficking, particularly children. Provides services that include lodging, food, clothing, psychological services, legal aid through a network of pro bono lawyers, and free medical care in collaboration with the MOH. Places unaccompanied children and adults in dedicated centers to receive schooling. (59; 40; 43; 60; 61) In 2017, the shelters continued to operate and provide both accommodation and medical assistance during the reporting period. (35)
Centers to Provide Aid to Victims of Child Labor†	The government maintains 23 youth centers and 67 child protection institutions that can serve up to 6,000 children engaged in child labor or vulnerable to child labor. (42; 62) In 2017, these centers provided assistance to children through programs in educational and vocational rehabilitation, and programs providing social support for homeless children who are exposed to all forms of danger, including economic exploitation, sexual exploitation, drug use, violence, and exploitation by gangs and terrorist networks. (15; 35)
Programs to Reduce School Dropout Rates†	MOE-funded School Dropout Prevention Program maintains about 2,300 social protection units in schools and mobile units in rural areas to monitor students and prevent school dropout. In 2017, no specific activities to reduce school dropout rates were reported. (62; 35)

† Program is funded by the Government of Tunisia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (41; 59; 63; 64)

Although Tunisia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. (15)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

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

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive.	2016 – 2017
Enforcement	Provide adequate resources for the Labor Inspectorate to conduct additional inspections, particularly in remote areas.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure that mechanisms exist to enforce the minimum age protections for children on inhabited premises, such as private homes, without permission of the property owner or a court order.	2014 – 2017
	Collect and publish information on the number of child labor violations found related to the criminal enforcement of child labor laws.	2013 – 2017
	Increase penalties for those who employ children in child labor.	2016 – 2017
Social Programs	Address barriers to education, especially for girls in rural areas, such as lack of reliable transportation, household poverty, physical violence, and religious custom.	2015 – 2017
	Provide sufficient resources to expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem.	2015 – 2017
	Publish the full results of the National Child Labor Survey and make the microdata publicly available so that they can be used to inform programming and policies.	2017

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