

In 2018, Papua New Guinea made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Department of Community Development, Youth, and Religion distributed the first Child Care Center licenses, which are centers that provide a safe location for children removed by Child Protection Officers from situations deemed to be harmful to their health and safety. However, children in Papua New Guinea engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. Papua New Guinea's laws do not specifically define the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children, nor do they prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. Furthermore, insufficient resources hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Papua New Guinea engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1,2) Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. (3,4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Papua New Guinea. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		79.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (5)  
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2019. (6)

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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working on tea, coffee, and palm oil plantations (7)
	Deep sea fishing, including harvesting sea cucumbers and pearls (4)
Industry	Mining, including gold mining (3,4)
Services	Domestic work (1,7)
	Street work, including scavenging for recyclables, begging, directing traffic, and sometimes directing traffic while begging (3,4,8)
	Working in markets, including unloading and carrying heavy bags of food (9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including working in bars, nightclubs, and brothels, and use in the production of pornography, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2)
	Forced domestic work (1,2)
	Illicit activities, including selling drugs (3,4,10)

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

In Papua New Guinea, children are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation. (1,2) Some children from rural areas are sent to live with relatives or "host" families in cities, where they may be forced to perform domestic work to pay off family debts. (1-3)

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Research found that the threat of gender-based violence prevents many girls from attending school. (11) Children are commonly seen directing vehicle movements in and out of public parking spaces and directing traffic in busy urban business centers, especially during business hours. (4,12) Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining, for which they lack appropriate training and equipment, and in handling dangerous chemicals, including mercury used in gold mining. (4) Although the government has established a free education policy, in practice many schools charge fees for books, uniforms, and supplies. (13-15,16) The Tuition Fee-Free policy provides government subsidies to primary and secondary schools to cover the costs associated with accommodating additional children in school. However, some schools report not receiving the subsidy, and some have closed as a result. Lack of access to schools increases children's vulnerability to child labor. (4,17)

## II. Legal Framework for Child Labor

Papua New Guinea has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

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

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Papua New Guinea's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children and the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 103 of the Employment Act (18)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 54 of the <i>Lukautim Pikinini Act</i> (19)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 43 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea; Section 208 of the Criminal Code (20,21)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 208 of the Criminal Code (21)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 229J–229O and 229R–229T of the Criminal Code (22)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Section 30 of the Defence Act (23)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

\* No conscription (24)

According to the Employment Act, children ages 11 through 16 may be allowed to work under certain conditions. The minimum age of 11 for light work is not in compliance with international standards, and the law does not specify the types of activities in which light work is permitted nor the number of hours per week that this work may be undertaken. (18,25) Papua New Guinea also does not have laws that prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. (26) The law does not sufficiently protect children from commercial sexual exploitation, as using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. (22)

### 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 Department of Labor and Industrial Relations that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations	Implements and enforces child labor laws. (27)
Department of Community Development, Youth, and Religion	Implements and oversees the Child Protection ( <i>Lukautim Pikinini</i> ) Act. (28) The Office of Child and Family Services enforces the <i>Lukautim Pikinini</i> Act, including provisions on child labor and its worst forms. (4, 12, 28)
Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary	Enforces laws against commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in illicit activities. (4) Includes the specialized Family and Sexual Violence unit, which includes protecting children's rights and safety. (4)

#### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human resource allocation.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	43 (3)	Unknown (4)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	No (3)	Unknown (4)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	Unknown (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (29)	Unknown (4)

The Government of Papua New Guinea did not respond to requests for information related to labor law enforcement efforts. Labor inspectors sometimes carry out routine inspections in hazardous workplaces or in the manufacturing sector; however, due to limited personnel capacity, labor inspectors generally respond

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to specific child labor complaints on a case-by-case basis. (4,7,30,31) Insufficient resources hamper the labor inspectorate’s capacity to enforce child labor laws, including administrative and budgetary constraints that prevented officers from receiving sufficient training. (3,4,32) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Papua New Guinea’s workforce, which includes approximately 3.68 million workers. According to the ILO’s technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Papua New Guinea would employ about 245 labor inspectors. (24,33)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea took actions to combat child labor (Table 7).

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (3)	Unknown (4)

The Government of Papua New Guinea did not respond to requests for information related to criminal law enforcement efforts related to child labor. However, in 2018, the Department of Community Development, Youth, and Religion commenced ongoing Child Protection Officer trainings that clarified their roles—including preventing and responding to child sexual exploitation—under the *Lukautim Pikinini* Act. (4,19,34) The government also referred two child victims of commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking to care facilities for assistance. (35)

## IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee	Coordinates efforts to combat human trafficking. Chaired by the Department of Justice and the Attorney General, with representatives from more than 15 government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations. (34-36) Research was unable to determine activities undertaken by the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee during the reporting year.

In 2018, the Department of Justice and the Attorney General trained 80 law enforcement officials and conducted a workshop for 32 judges on anti-human trafficking policies. However, research was unable to determine whether these trainings and workshops included child labor elimination components, including components on eliminating the worst forms of child labor. (35) Furthermore, it is reported that there is a lack of senior governmental leadership and participation at the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee meetings. (35)

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including policy implementation.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea (2017–2020)	Promotes government coordination efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through more effective prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures and capacity building. (3,37) The government reported no activities undertaken by the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea during the reporting year. (4)
Papua New Guinea Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan (2015–2020)	Seeks to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute offenders. (38) Research was unable to determine activities undertaken by the Papua New Guinea Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan during the reporting year as it did not report on efforts undertaken to identify child trafficking victims. (2)
Universal Basic Education Plan (2010–2019)	Promotes enrollment of children in school and aims to improve retention rates to ensure that children receive 9 years of basic education. (39,14) Research was unable to determine activities undertaken by the Universal Basic Education Plan during the reporting year.
Tuition Fee-Free Policy	Aims to improve access to education by abolishing school tuition fees and providing subsidies to cover costs for primary and secondary school children who cannot afford an education. (4,30,15,40) Research was unable to determine activities undertaken by the Tuition Fee-Free Policy during the reporting year.

In 2018, the government did not implement any National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor-related programs due to a lack of effective administrative planning and a lack of human and financial resources. (12) Research was unable to determine whether the Universal Basic Education Plan integrated child labor elimination and prevention strategies. (41)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, 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
Urban Youth Employment Project (2011–2018)†	Government and World Bank-funded project that provides youth with training, temporary jobs, and skills development through apprenticeship projects. (42) Research was unable to determine activities undertaken by the Urban Youth Employment Project during the reporting year.
1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain†	Telephone hotline funded by the Government of Papua New Guinea to report child welfare concerns and physical or sexual violence. (43) In 2018, this hotline was not in service due to a lack of funding and human resources. (35)
Child Care Centers†	Centers that provide a safe location for children removed by Child Protection Officers from situations deemed to be harmful to their health and safety. In 2018, the Department of Community Development, Youth, and Religion distributed the first Child Care Center licenses. (4,12,19)

† Program is funded by the Government of Papua New Guinea.

Research was unable to determine whether the government carried out programs specifically designed to assist children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, or mining. Neither the Government of Papua New Guinea nor NGOs funded specific human trafficking victim services. (35,2,44) While *1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain* was inoperable during the reporting year, the International Organization for Migration maintained a hotline that also provided anti-human trafficking information and resources. (35,45)

## VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

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

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**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2018
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2014 – 2018
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2018
	Raise the minimum age for light work to 13 to comply with international standards, and ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2018
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2018
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2018
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances.	2016 – 2018
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2018
	Ensure that the law establishes a compulsory education age that is equal to the minimum age for employment.	2009 – 2018
Enforcement	Publish information on child labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of child labor penalties imposed.	2014 – 2018
	Strengthen the inspection system by ensuring that inspectors conduct routine or targeted inspections in addition to those that are complaint-driven.	2014 – 2018
	Provide inspectors with the resources necessary to enforce labor laws and other laws that protect children from the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2018
	Establish a referral mechanism between labor and criminal law enforcement authorities and social services agencies to ensure that victims of child labor receive appropriate support services.	2014 – 2018
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2017 – 2018
	Institutionalize and fully fund training for labor and criminal inspectors on the worst forms of child labor, including training for new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment.	2016 – 2018
	Publish information on the number of criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of child labor investigations initiated, the number of child labor penalties imposed, and the number of criminal law enforcement convictions secured.	2017 – 2018
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat all forms of child labor, including the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2018
	Publish anti-child labor activities undertaken by government coordinating mechanisms.	2018
	Ensure that there is senior governmental leadership and participation at the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee meetings.	2018
Government Policies	Fully fund, implement, and publish information about activities undertaken by the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea.	2017 – 2018
	Publish activities undertaken by the Papua New Guinea Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan.	2018
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Universal Basic Education Plan.	2013 – 2018
	Publish activities undertaken by the Universal Basic Education Plan.	2018
	Fully fund and publish activities undertaken by the Tuition Fee-Free Policy, and fully reimburse schools for the added costs of accommodating additional students.	2018
Social Programs	Increase access to education by instituting programs to address gender-based violence against girls in schools and fully eliminating school-related fees.	2014 – 2018
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2018
	Institute programs that assist children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in all relevant sectors, especially commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and mining.	2010 – 2018
	Fully fund and reopen <i>I-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain</i> .	2018
	Implement and fully fund human trafficking victim services, including services dedicated to the worst forms of child labor.	2018
	Publish activities undertaken by the Urban Youth Employment Project to address child labor.	2018



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