

In 2015, Papua New Guinea made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government adopted the country's first National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor and commenced implementation of a new social program aimed at identifying children working on the street and ensuring that they are returned to safe living situations and to school. However, children in Papua New Guinea are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Papua New Guinea's labor laws do not specifically define the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children, and the minimum age at which children are permitted to engage in light work is not in compliance with international standards. The labor inspectorate lacks the training and resources necessary to effectively enforce laws related to child labor. Additionally, there is no compulsory age for education in Papua New Guinea, which increases the risk of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Papua New Guinea are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking.(1-4) 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)	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		78.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(5)
Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2015.(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,* cocoa,* copra,* oil palm,* and rubber plantations* (1, 7)
Services	Domestic work (1, 2, 4, 7)
	Street work, including vending, chopping firewood for sale,* moving furniture,* scavenging for scrap metal and scrap food for pig feed,* and begging* (1, 3, 7-12)
	Work in markets, including unloading and carrying heavy bags of food (7, 10, 12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including working in bars,* nightclubs, and brothels,* and used in the production of pornography,* each sometimes as a result of trafficking (1, 2, 4, 7, 12)
	Forced domestic work (1-4, 12)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

‡ 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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In Papua New Guinea, children are trafficked within the country for commercial sexual exploitation.(2, 4) Children from rural areas are sometimes sent to live with relatives or “host” families in cities, where they engage in domestic work.(13) In some cases, these children are forced to perform domestic services to pay off family debts.(1, 2, 12, 14) Child domestic workers in situations of indentured servitude lack freedom of mobility, work long hours, do not have access to medical treatment, and do not attend school.(2)

Some reports indicate that the threat of gender-based sexual harassment and violence prevents many girls from attending school.(12, 15, 16) Although the Government has established a free education policy, in practice, many schools charge fees for books, uniforms, and other supplies.(4, 17-20) These additional school fees are a barrier to education and may make children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.(16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF 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, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 103 of the Employment Act (21)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 10 and 96 of the Child Bill (<i>Lukautim Pikinini</i>); Sections 104–105 of the Employment Act (17, 21)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities 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 Amendment Act (22, 23)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 208 of the Criminal Code Amendment Act (23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 229J–229O and 229R–229T of the Criminal Code (Sexual Offenses and Crimes Against Children Act) (24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	16	Section 30 of the Defense Act (25)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

* No conscription (26)

Papua New Guinea has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) has been developing a hazardous work list since late 2012 to include in

amendments to the Employment Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act.(1, 8, 27) Parliament, however, did not adopt legislation related to hazardous child labor during the reporting period.(3)

According to the Employment Act, children ages 11 to 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 may be permitted or prescribe the number of hours per week that this work may be undertaken.(21) 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.(27)

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).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)	Implement and enforce child labor laws.(16)
Department of Religion, Youth, and Community Development	Enforce the Child Bill (<i>Lukautim Pikinini</i>). (16)
Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Sexual Offenses Squad	Enforce laws against commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in illicit activities.(16)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2015, labor law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	\$4,650,000 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (3)	182 (28)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (16)	Yes (16)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	No (3)	No (7)
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	N/A
■ Refresher Courses Provided	No (3)	No (7)
Number of Labor Inspections	Unknown	169 (7)
■ Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	169 (7)
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown (7)
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (7)
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (21)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (7)	No (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (7)	No (7)

Labor inspectors sometimes carry out routine inspections in hazardous workplaces or in the manufacturing sector; however, due to limited capacity, the DLIR reported that labor inspectors generally respond only to specific child labor complaints.(3, 7) Both the ILO Committee of Experts and senior staff at the Department of Religion, Youth, and Community Development have noted that inadequate resources and cultural acceptance of child labor limit the effectiveness of child labor law enforcement.(27, 29, 30)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2015, criminal law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea 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	2014	2015
Training for Investigators		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (7)
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (31)	N/A
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	1 (16, 30)	2 (32)
Number of Violations Found	0 (16, 30)	3 (32)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (16, 30)	0 (32)
Number of Convictions	0 (16, 30)	0 (32)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (31)	No (32)

In 2015, the Department of Justice and the Attorney General incorporated instruction on the topic of human trafficking into its countrywide training programs. The Papua New Guinea Customs service also provided anti-human trafficking training as part of a training course held in September.(32) During the reporting period, the National Human Trafficking Committee drafted standard operating procedures for a National Referral Mechanism to assist victims of human trafficking, including children. Although these procedures were piloted in 2015, they have not yet been finalized or officially endorsed.(32)

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

Although the Government has established a coordination mechanism to combat human trafficking, research found no evidence of mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including all its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Human Trafficking Committee	Coordinate efforts to combat trafficking in persons. Chaired by the Department of Justice and the Attorney General.(31) Includes representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister, the Department for National Planning and Monitoring, the Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority, Customs, the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, the DLIR, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the National Council of Women, the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council, the State Solicitor's office, the Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs, the Department for Community Development, various NGOs, the IOM, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCHR), UNICEF, UN Women, and the U.S. Embassy Port Moresby.(30)

Coordination mechanisms that were expected to launch in 2012 were still pending during the 2015 reporting period. The DLIR Child Labor Desk, designed to track child labor cases and facilitate coordination among relevant agencies, was not yet in place.(7, 16) The Secretary of DLIR did not sign the endorsement necessary to establish the Project Advisory Committee, a permanent, interagency committee on child labor.(7, 16, 33)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea†	Establishes a comprehensive framework to coordinate government efforts to reduce and eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Papua New Guinea. Includes four strategic objectives: mainstreaming child labor and the worst forms of child labor in social and economic policies, legislation, and programs; improving the knowledge base; implementing effective prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures; and strengthening the technical, institutional, and human resource capacity of stakeholders.(34)

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

Policy	Description
Universal Basic Education Plan (2010–2019)*	Seeks to ensure that all children complete 9 years of basic, quality education, starting at age 6; to reduce poverty through education; and to build Government capacity to manage education.(18) Key objectives include improving infrastructure; increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities at school; providing teacher training; providing over-age children with access to basic education; and abolishing all school fees.(18, 35)
Tuition Fee-Free Policy*	Aims to improve access to education by abolishing school fees for children in grades 1 through 10 and providing subsidies for students in grades 11 and 12.(3, 20)
Vision 2050*	Establishes a long-term socioeconomic strategy for Papua New Guinea. Pillars of the plan include human capital development and gender, youth, and people empowerment.(36) Prioritizes access to education, knowledge, and improved technology; community empowerment; access to credit; the inclusion of more individuals in the formal economy; and equitable development in rural areas, where poverty is most pronounced.(36)
Medium-Term Development Plan (2011–2015)*	Established a 5-year plan for national development, in line with Vision 2050.(37) Prioritized education and public utility infrastructure improvements.(37)

* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In 2015, the National Human Trafficking Committee finalized the country's first Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan, which was jointly drafted by the Department of Justice and the Attorney General and the IOM.(31, 32) The plan will not be enforceable, however, until it is endorsed by the Papua New Guinea National Executive Council.(32)

Although Papua New Guinea's Universal Basic Education Plan includes the goal of establishing 3 years of mandatory schooling for children until age 9, the Government has not yet enacted an enforceable policy for compulsory education. The lack of standards in this area increases the risk of children's involvement in child labor, as children are not required to be in school nor are they allowed to legally work until age 16.(8, 33)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Papua New Guinea funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Decent Work Country Program (2013–2015)	Implemented by the Government, the Trade Union Congress, and the Employers' Federation through technical assistance from the ILO and cooperation with the Government of Australia. Seeks to establish a national employment strategy.(38) Explicitly recognizes the relationship between education and child labor and prioritizes youth employment services.(38) Concrete measures to be taken include finalizing child labor provisions in the draft Employment Bill, drafting a hazardous work list, and formalizing the Child Labor Unit in the DLIR. Includes a youth employment initiative that provides business training to out-of-school youth, particularly those who are marginalized or disabled.(38)
Urban Youth Employment Project† (2011–2016)	Jointly funded Government and World Bank project that aims to provide training, temporary jobs, skill development through apprenticeships, and 2-month placements on public works projects for youth. Targets 13,500 disadvantaged youth in and around Port Moresby.(39)
Safe Care Homes Project*†	Government project implemented in collaboration with partners, including World Vision, that seeks to identify children working on the streets and return them to their parents and to school. Receives referrals of children in need of further protection.(40)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

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

During the reporting period, Papua New Guinea Government officials, civil society organizations, representatives from worker and employer organizations, and the media participated in an ILO-sponsored Sub-regional Forum on Combating Child Labor and Trafficking. Representatives from five Pacific Island nations shared knowledge, practical experiences, and innovative approaches to address the worst forms of child labor.(13) As a result, tripartite partners in Papua New Guinea identified priority areas for action, including the institutionalization of a Child Labor Unit in the DLIR.(13)

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Although the Government has implemented programs that address children engaged in street work, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs to assist children involved in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, or agriculture.

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 Papua New Guinea (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, and the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2015
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2015
	Raise the minimum age for light work to 13 to comply with international standards and ensure that the law's light work provisions are specific enough to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2015
	Ensure that the law specifically prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2015
Enforcement	Make data on labor law enforcement publicly available, including the number of child labor violations found and the number of penalties imposed and collected.	2014 – 2015
	Institutionalize training for labor inspectors, including training for new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment and subsequent refresher courses.	2015
	Establish a mechanism to receive child labor complaints.	2015
	Strengthen the inspection system by ensuring that inspectors conduct routine or targeted inspections in addition to those that are complaint driven.	2014 – 2015
	Provide inspectors with the resources necessary to enforce labor laws and other laws required to protect children from the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2015
	Establish a referral mechanism between law enforcement officials and social services agencies to ensure that victims of child labor, including in its worst forms, receive appropriate support services.	2014 – 2015
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor, including in all its worst forms.	2009 – 2015
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing policies.	2013 – 2015
	Endorse the National Action Plan to address trafficking in persons issues, including the trafficking of children.	2015
	Implement the Universal Basic Education Plan to ensure that basic education is compulsory for all children and that the compulsory education age is equivalent to or greater than the legal minimum age for employment.	2009 – 2015
Social Programs	Institute programs that address the issue of sexual violence in schools to ensure that children, especially girls, are able to safely access education.	2014 – 2015
	Monitor schools to ensure that extra educational fees are not imposed on children for the mandated term of free education, as defined by national policy.	2014 – 2015
	Institute programs that assist children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in all relevant occupations or activities, especially commercial sexual exploitation and domestic work.	2010 – 2015

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