

# Ethiopia

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

*In 2013, Ethiopia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Ethiopia approved a National Human Rights Action Plan, which aims to strengthen the implementation of human rights, including efforts to eliminate child labor, and developed a new labor inspection guideline, which includes child labor issues. The Government also operates Africa's largest social protection program, the Productive Safety Net Program Phase II, and participates in and implements several programs to combat the worst forms of child labor. However, children in Ethiopia continue to engage in child labor in agriculture and in the worst forms of child labor in domestic service. Gaps in legislation continue to put children at risk and government efforts to address child labor have not sufficiently targeted sectors with a high incidence of child labor.*



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

Children in Ethiopia are engaged in child labor in agriculture and in the worst forms of child labor in domestic service.(1-4) Data from the Government's 2011 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) show that most children work for a family business. In addition, DHS data indicates that the percentages of child labor are higher among males and in rural areas.(5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ethiopia.

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

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	22.0 (5,545,319)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	54.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	17.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		43.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2005, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(6)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2011.(7)

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	Planting and harvesting apples,* coffee,* cotton,* onions,* bananas,* flowers,* sugarcane,* and tea* (8-17)
	Herding cattle (1, 13-15, 17-19)
	Fishing,*† activities unknown (2, 13, 15, 16, 20, 21)
	Mining† gold (11, 12, 21)
Industry	Quarrying*† and working at stone-crusher plants† (2, 14, 20)
	Construction*† and manufacturing,* activities unknown (2, 4, 13-16, 18, 21)
	Making pottery products* (13, 22)
	Traditional weaving (13, 15, 23-26)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work† (2, 4, 21, 25)
	Unpaid household services, including carrying heavy loads of water (13, 18)
	Street work,† including as shoe shiners, assistants to taxi drivers,* vendors, porters,* and beggars (2, 13, 15-17, 21, 27-31)
	Garbage scavenging (32)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4, 21, 30, 33-35)
	Used in the production of pornography* (36)
	Domestic service, herding, street vending, and traditional weaving, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (13, 24, 36-40)

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

† 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.

In Ethiopia, children work in the traditional weaving industry in Addis Ababa and in the Gamo Gofa and Wolayita Zones.(13, 15, 23-26) Child weavers may work long hours, face physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from their employers; and develop injuries as a result of crouching while working on traditional weaving looms.(13, 18, 41, 42) Anecdotal evidence suggests that some child weavers are held in debt bondage.(40, 42) In addition, children are trafficked from rural areas to Addis Ababa and other regions of the country for forced labor in the weaving industry.(13, 36, 37) The Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions reports that there was an increase in child labor in the construction industry in 2013.(4)




Although the Government has improved access to education, the lack of adequate schools in rural areas increases children's risk of entering the workforce at a young age.(21, 43-45)Droughts and floods also hindered access to education in Afar; Amhara; Benishangul-Gumuz; Dire Dawa; Gambella; Harar; Oromia; Somali Region; Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR); and Tigray.(31, 46) In SNNPR, sexual abuse and harassment of girls is also a barrier to education.(45) In addition, even though the Vital Events Registration Proclamation mandates the registration of all births, many children in Ethiopia are not registered. Unable to prove citizenship, nonregistered children may have difficulty accessing services such as education.(25, 47-50) In 2013, the Government established the Vital Events Registration Agency to assist with the registration of births and rollout of the Proclamation, which has been delayed by the absence of uniform national identification cards.(37, 49, 51)

In 2013, Ethiopia proposed a law that would allow for the ratification of the CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The President still needs to sign the bill before the Protocol is ratified.(4)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Ethiopia 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	✓
 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	✓

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The Government has established relevant 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	14	Article 89.2 of the Labor Proclamation (52)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 89.1 and 89.3 of the Labor Proclamation (52)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 89.4 of the Labor Proclamation; Activities Prohibited for Young Workers Directive (52-54)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 18.3 of the Constitution (55)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 18.2 of the Constitution; Articles 597, 635, and 637 of the Criminal Code; local bylaws (55-57)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 634 of the Criminal Code (56, 57)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 525 of the Criminal Code (56, 57)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 270 of the Criminal Code (56)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	Yes		Education and Training Policy (58, 59)

\* No conscription or no standing military.

Ethiopian law is not completely consistent with international standards regarding child labor. Article 89.5 of the Labor Proclamation allows children above the age of 14 to engage in hazardous work if this work is performed following a government-approved vocational training course.(52, 60) Children working in non-contractual employment do not have the same protections under child labor laws and regulations as children working in contractual employment.(60-62) In addition, penalties outlined in Article 184 of the Labor Proclamation for violating child labor laws are low and do not deter violations.(52, 63) Although the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) submitted a proposal to Parliament in 2012 to raise the minimum age for employment from 14 to 15 years, the minimum age was not raised in 2013.(4)

There is no law establishing compulsory education in Ethiopia. The lack of compulsory education may increase the risk of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor as they are not required to be in school.(4, 64) In addition, although primary education is free, the cost of school supplies keeps some children from attending school.(3, 12)

In 2013, the Sodo town administration (Wolayita zone, SNNPR) enacted a directive to prevent social and economic crimes against children.(65) The directive requires community members to report instances of child labor to the *kebele* or ward administration. The directive also includes small fines for those found using child laborers.(65, 66)

### 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
Occupational Safety and Health Case Team (OSHCT)	Enforce occupational safety, health, and wage and hour protections, which include child labor laws, at industrial enterprises in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.(57, 67) Collect and analyze data and make policymaking recommendations for labor purposes. Located within MOLSA.(17, 67, 68)
Regional Bureaus of Social and Labor Affairs (BOLSAs) and City Administration	Conduct labor inspections at the zonal offices, and regional and city levels.(67) In the case of the BOLSA office in Addis Ababa, operate an occupational safety and health laboratory to identify work place hazards.(48)
Ethiopian Federal Police and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Investigate and prosecute criminal violations of laws that protect against the worst forms of child labor.(4, 12) In the case of police stations at the regional level, employ a trained child protection officer and for the 10 sub-city level police stations in Addis Ababa, employ Child Protection Units.(34)

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)**

Organization/Agency	Role
The Human Trafficking and Narcotics Section	Collaborate with the prosecutor's office to conduct investigations, prosecute offenders, and report and collect trafficking data. Located in the Organized Crime Investigation Unit of the Federal Police.(4, 12, 37)

Law enforcement agencies in Ethiopia took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2013, the Occupational Safety and Health Case Team (OSHCT) employed 291 labor inspectors. MOLSA reports that the decline in labor inspectors from 380 in 2012 was a result of high turnover and limited financial resources.(4) During the year, 245 labor inspectors from the Addis Ababa, SNNPR, Tigray, and Oromia regions received training on how to conduct child labor inspections.(66) The ILO reports that OSHCT is understaffed and lacks sector-specific occupational safety and health guidelines, which weakens enforcement efforts.(67) OSHCT and Regional Bureaus of Social and Labor Affairs (BOLSAs) both lack equipment, and their inspectors do not have access to suitable transportation, sometimes relying on employers and trade union representatives for rides.(4, 67) The ILO reports that labor inspectors' salaries are not competitive.(63, 67, 68).

Labor inspectors do not have the authority to impose immediate sanctions, and fines can be issued only by a court.(67) Although labor inspectors bring cases to court, they lack training on presenting evidence in court.(63, 69) MOLSA encourages labor inspectors to advise employers on compliance issues rather than punish employers by issuing citations. However, labor inspectors report egregious violations to the police.(4) The labor relations board, an institution that settles labor disputes, can also receive labor complaints and issue decisions on alleged violations.(42) MOLSA does not disaggregate child labor data, and research found no information on the number of labor inspections, child labor law violations found, how many citations were issued, or whether appropriate penalties were applied.(4, 68)

During the reporting period, the Government published a Labor Inspection Operation Manual, which includes child labor issues and aims to standardize the labor inspection process throughout the country.(66) In addition, the Wolayita zone BOLSA committed to monitoring 6,000 child laborers and providing services to 150 victims of child labor in its 2013 budget.(70)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

In 2012, the last date for which information is available, the Ethiopian Federal Police Human Trafficking and Narcotics Section employed 31 investigators. In 2013, the Human Trafficking and Narcotics Section identified 133 cases of human trafficking and prosecuted 158 trafficking offenders.(37) The Federal High Court secured 100 convictions for trafficking in persons and ordered punishments ranging from two to 16 years' imprisonment without parole. There is no information available on whether these cases involved children.(37) During the year, the Wolayita zone police department prevented 424 children from being trafficked.(71) The Federal Police also reported that they routinely intercepted children along the borders during the reporting period.(34) The Gamo Gofa zone High Court also sentenced six people for trafficking children with prison sentences ranging from one to eight years, and the SNNPR Supreme Court found six people guilty of trafficking children from Chenchu.(66) Although the Government attained prosecutions and convictions during the year, there are low prosecution and conviction rates for the internal trafficking of women and children for forced labor and sexual exploitation.(72)

During the year, 77 judges were trained on child labor issues.(4) Police departments and district officials also refer victims of the worst forms of child labor to NGO-run shelters and government orphanages.(36)

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

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

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**Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinate activities on the worst forms of child labor. Includes members from MOLSA; the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs (MOWYCA); and the Ministry of Education.(4)
MOLSA's Deputy Minister Forum	Combat the worst forms of child labor at the national level. Meets on a monthly basis and includes participants from the Ethiopian Employers' Federation and Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions.(4)
MOLSA child labor desk	Coordinate efforts between MOLSA and MOWYCA on child labor issues.(17, 48, 73)
National Steering Committee against Sexual Exploitation of Children	Develop action plans and coordinate activities against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.(43)
National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons	Address international exploitation, including the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and composed of all federal ministers and regional presidents.(4, 34)
National Human Trafficking Task Force	Develop action plans and coordinate activities against trafficking in persons on a quarterly basis.(36, 74) Chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and includes representation by deputy state ministers.(34)
Regional Technical Working Groups on Trafficking	Identify trends and areas in need of public awareness campaigns on human trafficking. Meets on a weekly basis and includes officials from regional federal ministries and agencies.(34, 36, 37)
Child Protection Committees, Child Rights Clubs, and Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Task Forces	Promote children's rights, provide children with food and school supplies, and train members on child labor, case management, international child labor standards, and Ethiopian child labor laws. Composed of children, police, health workers, and teachers.(15-17, 75, 76)

The National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons normally meets twice per year, but during the reporting period it met quarterly. The National Human Trafficking Task Force held its annual meeting in June 2013.(4, 66) In addition, MOLSA's child labor desk employed one person during the reporting period.(73)

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Ethiopia has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

**Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2013-15)	Includes guidelines on child labor identification, withdrawal, reintegration, and educational policies. Available in Amharic.(17, 48, 77) In 2013, 77 participants from federal agencies, regional governments, and media groups attended a training on the implementation of the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor.(66)
Protocols and Guidelines for Identification, Withdrawal, Rehabilitation, and Integration of Victims of the Worst forms of Child Labor in Solid Waste Management and the Traditional Weaving Sector (2010)	Describes the work conditions of children engaged in garbage scavenging and the traditional weaving sector and includes guidelines for stakeholders to implement interventions.(32, 78)
Decent Work Country Program (2013-2015)†	Describes the child labor situation in Ethiopia and includes targets for the elimination of child labor, such as the establishment of child labor units at the City Administration level.(79)
National Youth Policy (2005)	Addresses the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and illicit work.(80)
National Employment Policy & Strategy of Ethiopia (2009)	Describes the root causes of child labor in Ethiopia and lists interventions that may be used to combat child labor, including income generating activities and awareness raising.(81)
UN Development Assistance Framework (2012-2015)	Promotes improved access to education and livelihood services for vulnerable children and seeks the protection of children from abuse, violence, and exploitation and the withdrawal and rehabilitation of children engaged in child labor.(82)
Standard Service Delivery Guidelines for Orphans and Vulnerable Children's Care (2010)	Identifies that OVCs are at increased risk of exploitive child labor and includes the goal of keeping children in school.(83)
National Human Rights Action Plan (2013)†	Aims to strengthen the implementation of human rights in Ethiopia, including by making efforts to eliminate exploitative child labor.(66, 84, 85)

**Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)**

Policy	Description
National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (2010)*	Supports early education programs for children and community-based non-formal school readiness programs.(86, 87)
Growth and Transformation Plan (2010-2015)*	Calls for the expansion of education services and outlines interventions to provide greater opportunities for vulnerable households to engage in decent work.(88)
National Technical Vocational Education and Training Strategy (2008)*	Aims to increase employment opportunities for school dropouts and youth without formal education through technology and skills training.(53, 89)
General Education Quality Assurance Package (2008)*	Seeks to improve the quality of general education through curriculum development, textbook assessment, teacher training, and school construction throughout Ethiopia.(90)

\* The impact of this policy on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Policy was launched during the reporting period.

The National Youth Policy and Decent Work Country Program do not have budgets or detailed action plans related to the worst forms of child labor.(57, 80, 83, 91) In addition, the National Child Policy, Social Protection Policy, and National Action Plan Against Trafficking, which were drafted to protect the rights of children, have not yet been adopted.(73, 92)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2013, the Government of Ethiopia funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

**Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Child-Labor-Free Zones	Government program that pilots child-labor-free zones in the cities of Addis Ababa and Adama in collaboration with the Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment. Child protection officers, labor inspectors, police officers, and other stakeholders support this initiative by reintegrating child laborers.(17) In 2013, the child labor free zones were expanded to three additional urban areas, including Bahir Dar, Dessie, and Dire Dawa. In addition, one district in the city of Adama became child labor free in 2013.(4)
Ethiopians Fighting Against Child Exploitation	\$10 million USDOL-funded, 4-year project implemented by World Vision, targets 20,000 children engaged in or at risk of entering exploitative child labor, particularly in the traditional weaving industry and in rural areas.(15) Assists 7,000 households of targeted children to promote sustainable livelihoods, and collaborates with MOLSA to coordinate the provision of services and provide occupational safety and health training to labor inspectors. Operates primarily in Addis Ababa and in the Gamo Gofa and Wolayita Zones.(15)
Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries to support the priorities of the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016 established by the Hague Global Child Labor Conference in 2010. Aims to build the capacity of the national government and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor in Ethiopia.(93)
Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development (MAP)†	USDOL-funded research project implemented by the ILO in 10 countries, including Ethiopia, to increase the knowledge base around child labor by collecting new data, analyzing existing data, and building capacity to conduct research in this area.(94) Aims to conduct a national child labor survey in Ethiopia.(94)
Child Labor Awareness Raising‡	MOLSA programs that raise awareness on child labor issues, including the quarterly media forum that raises awareness through broadcasts on national television; regional and local level awareness raising to encourage community members to report child labor violations to the authorities; and awareness raising to address the trafficking of humans from rural to urban areas.(4, 34, 66)
Afar Region Emergency Migration Response Center	Ethiopian Federal Police operated center to assist human trafficking victims by providing them with shelter and transportation back to their villages in collaboration with the IOM. In 2013, this center provided assistance to 37 children.(34, 95)
Cash Transfer Program*	3-year Government program, in partnership with UNICEF, provides vulnerable populations, including child laborers, with cash transfer in two districts of the Tigray Region, and the Afar, Oromia, and SNNPR regions.(12, 96-98) Aims to improve school attendance and enrollment and support the health of the children in the targeted districts. Operates through Community Care Coalitions.(98)

**Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor (cont)**

Program	Description
Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) Phase II‡	Government program that operates in 319 food insecure districts and assisted approximately 6.9 million beneficiaries in 2013.(95, 99-103) Considered as Africa's largest social protection program, it includes several components, one of which provides cash and in-kind transfers to OVCs and households without able-bodied adults who can work. This component has been shown to reduce the amount of time children spend doing household work and increase the amount of time children spend in school.(99, 101, 102)
General Education Quality Improvement Project*	\$417 million World Bank and other donors funded project aimed to improve the quality of general education across Ethiopia through curriculum development, textbook assessment, teacher training, and school construction. Implemented from 2008-2013.(104)

\* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Program was launched during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Ethiopia.

While the Government participates in and implements several programs to combat the worst forms of child labor, its efforts have not sufficiently targeted sectors with a high incidence of the worst forms of child labor, such as agriculture and domestic service. In addition, in rare cases, the promotion of employment through public works component of PSNP Phase II has been shown to increase the amount of time children work, as families substitute adult family members' labor with children's labor to receive benefits under this program.(101)

## 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 Ethiopia (Table 9).

**Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Laws	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013
	Amend the Labor Proclamation to raise the minimum age when children may enter hazardous work following vocational training from 14 to 16, in line with ILO Convention 138.	2009 – 2013
	Ensure that relevant child labor laws and regulations apply equally to children working in non-contractual and contractual employment.	2009 – 2013
	Establish a compulsory education age that is consistent with the minimum age of employment.	2012 – 2013
	Amend the Labor Proclamation to provide for higher penalties to deter child labor law violations.	2013
Enforcement	Develop sector-specific occupational safety and health guidelines.	2009 – 2013
	Ensure that OSHCT and BOLSA inspectors have adequate resources to conduct systematic inspections in all sectors of the economy.	2009 – 2013
	Provide labor inspectors with competitive salaries to reduce turnover.	2009 – 2013
	Provide enforcement personnel with training on presenting evidence in court.	2009 – 2013
	Enforce the Labor Proclamation by issuing citations when child labor law violations are found.	2013
	Gather and publish information about the number of inspections, child labor law violations found, citations, and criminal prosecutions initiated and issued, and the penalties applied.	2009 – 2013
	Separate trafficking statistics for children and adults.	2011 – 2013
Increase efforts to improve the likelihood of successful prosecution and conviction of offenders who internally traffic women and children for forced labor and sexual exploitation.	2011 – 2013	

**Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms (cont)**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Assess the impact that existing policies may have on addressing child labor.	2013
	Include budgets and action plans related to the worst forms of child labor in development agendas and policies.	2009 – 2013
	Adopt the National Child Policy, Social Protection Policy, and National Action Plan Against Trafficking.	2012 – 2013
Social Programs	Assess the impact that existing social programs may have on addressing child labor.	2012 – 2013
	Develop social protection programs for the withdrawal from or prevention of children working in agriculture and domestic service.	2009 – 2013
	Improve access to education in rural areas by building additional schools, implementing programs that protect communities from droughts and floods, ensuring children are registered at birth, and addressing sexual abuse and harassment in schools.	2010 – 2013
	Ensure that children can complete primary school by subsidizing or defraying the cost of school supplies.	2010 – 2013

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