

In 2014, Mauritius made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government funded and participated in several programs to combat the worst forms of child labor and assist vulnerable households. The Government also operated drop-in centers to provide services to children formerly engaged in commercial sexual exploitation. However, children in Mauritius are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. Limited resources for the systematic enforcement of child labor laws impede government efforts to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. The Government does not currently ensure that victims of commercial sexual exploitation have access to comprehensive, quality services.

Agalega Islands, Cargados Carajos Shoals, and Rodrigues are not shown.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritius are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.(1-3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritius. 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 (%)		99.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(4)
Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2015.(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	Producing* and harvesting* vegetables (3, 6-9)
	Feeding livestock* (9)
	Fishing,* including diving,* and casting nets* and traps* (6, 10)
Industry	Work in masonry* and apparel shops* (6, 7)
Services	Domestic work* (3, 6)
	Street work, including vending,* begging,* and carrying* goods in public markets (3, 6-8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (1-3, 7, 8, 11)
	Used in illicit activities, including selling drugs* (6)

* 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.

Children in Mauritius are lured into commercial sexual exploitation by their peers, family members, or through false offers of other employment.(2, 3) As Mauritius has never conducted a national child labor survey, there is limited information about the prevalence of child labor in the country.

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Limited evidence suggests that incidences of physical and psychological abuse, including corporal punishment of students by teachers, prevent some children from attending school, increasing their risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. (1, 11-13)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Mauritius 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, 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	Section 6 of the Employment Rights Act (14)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 12 of the Employment Rights Act (14)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Section 8 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 6 of the Constitution (16)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 11 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 14 of the Child Protection Act; Article 253 of the Criminal Code (18, 19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 16 of the Child Protection Act (18)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	N/A†		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 37.2 of the Education Act (20)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 35 of the Education Act (20)

* No conscription (21)

† No standing military (21)

The Government of Mauritius continues to work on a comprehensive bill designed to harmonize the existing legal framework related to children's rights and to make sure it is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (3, 11, 22)

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
Inspection and Enforcement Division of the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, and Employment (MOLIRE)	Enforce all labor laws, including those related to child labor.(7, 23)
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Investigate any suspected or reported case of child labor or violation of a child's rights. Promote compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.(11, 24)
Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Minors' Brigade)	Investigate reports of child or forced labor, or in conjunction with routine police patrols.(1, 11) Patrol areas such as arcades, bus terminals, and other areas in which youth are vulnerable to involvement in commercial sexual exploitation.(1, 23) Maintain a database of all trafficking incidents of children and refer all cases of commercial sexual exploitation to the Child Development Unit (CDU).(3)
Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MOGE) CDU	Enforce legislation related to children, as well as implement policies and programs related to child development.(11, 25) Receive tips on all forms of child abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.(2, 23) Provide follow-up assistance to victims.(1, 11) Assign child welfare officers to accompany victims as they receive immediate medical care and work, in conjunction with the police if an official statement is needed.(2) Develop a central database and standard operating procedures for sharing information and taking action to address child labor.(3, 22)

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

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, and Employment (MOLIRE) employed 45 labor inspectors.(9, 25) MOLIRE inspectors did not receive training on child labor during the reporting period.(10) They conducted 840 labor inspections and found one child labor violation, which was transferred to judicial authorities.(9) Information is unavailable on the type and notification system for inspections, the number of citations, or whether appropriate penalties were applied. MOLIRE works closely with the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MOGE) and the Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Minors' Brigade) to ensure that victims of the worst forms of child labor receive appropriate protection and social services.(9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

During the reporting period, the Minors' Brigade employed 41 officers.(9) It carried out a public awareness campaign at schools and community centers on child abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation.(2) Minors' Brigade officers received training on human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. A referral mechanism exists between the Minors' Brigade and MOGE to provide social services and assistance to victims of child abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.(11) Research could not uncover the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and sentences imposed on crimes related to the worst forms of child labor. The Minors' Brigade, in cooperation with the Child Development Unit (CDU), manages the "119" and "113" hotlines to receive complaints about situations requiring child protection.(3, 11) However, the number of calls received related to the worst forms of child labor is unavailable.

Research revealed that criminal law enforcement agencies lacked staff, transportation, and other necessities to properly enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor.(2, 3) Research found that the Government has decreased its efforts to enforce anti-trafficking law and there is a lack of understanding of anti-trafficking in persons among government officials.(2, 26)

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).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Child Protection Committee (NCPC)	Coordinate, monitor, and evaluate activities on children's rights and welfare, including efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by MOGE and comprising representatives from more than 10 government ministries.(11) Also known as the Working Together Committee and includes a subcommittee that coordinates efforts to combat commercial sexual exploitation.(22, 27).

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Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (cont)

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Children's Council (NCC)	Serve as the executive of child protection programs and focus on child protection issues in the country as an independent, para-governmental entity under the auspices of MOGE.(1, 11)

In 2014, significant overlap continues to exist among the committees involved in child protection issues. The roles of the National Child Protection Committee (NCPC) and the National Children's Council (NCC) are unclear in coordinating efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor.(11)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Protocol of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Abuse	Lays out procedures for police and other officials to follow when handling sexual abuse cases, including commercial sexual exploitation.(11, 28)
Child Safety Online Action Plan	Prevents sexual exploitation of children on the Internet by strengthening the legal framework and raising awareness among parents and children.(11, 23)
National Policy Paper on the Family*	Supports child welfare through holistic support for families, including job training for parents.(11, 29)
Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan*	Improves equity of access to primary, secondary, and technical/vocational education, among other goals.(30)
UNDP Country Program for Mauritius*	Improves access to education for vulnerable children by reducing inequality.(31)

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

In 2014, the Government of Mauritius started drafting a National Child Protection Strategy and Action Plan that will strengthen national policies and programs to protect children from violence, human trafficking, and exploitative work; however, it has not yet been adopted.(3) Although the Government has adopted the Protocol of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Abuse, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Mauritius funded programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms. The Government has other programs that may have an impact on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Income Support Program*‡	Government program that provides money for 8,000 vulnerable families living below the Poverty Intervention Line. In 2014, the budget for this program was \$33 million.(25)
Social Aid Program*‡	Government program that provides assistance to 20,000 families.(11, 25)
Education Priority Zones (ZEP) *‡	Government program that combats social inequalities by providing equal opportunities to all primary school children throughout the country. Has been shown to reduce school dropout rates through enhanced community participation in education.(11, 27, 30) In 2014, the Government provided increased funding for low-performing schools.(25)
Child Mentoring Scheme*‡	Government program that provides one-on-one counseling to at-risk children through a government-selected mentor.(27, 32)
Summer and Winter School Program*‡	Government program that provides summer and winter schooling to enhance the successful transition of students from primary to secondary school.(23, 27)
Second Chance Program*‡	Government program to educate and provide vocational training and life skills to those who dropped out after age 16.(27)
Awareness-Raising Programs in Schools, Community Centers, and in the Media on Commercial Sexual Exploitation‡	Government program to educate the public on preventing sexual abuse and exploitation of children.(1, 2, 27)

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

Program	Description
Workshops on Commercial Sexual Exploitation‡	Government workshops to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation with vulnerable groups.(1, 33)
Drop-in Centers‡	Government program that provides counseling and referrals to victims of sexual abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.(3, 7)
Shelters and Institutional Care*‡	Government program that provides shelter and institutional care to victims who are referred to government or NGO shelters.(1, 7, 34)

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

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.

The Government's institutional care facilities for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and other abuses are overcrowded, and service providers are overtaxed and lack appropriate training. These institutions do not have appropriate standards of care, leading to inadequate service provision.(1) In addition, child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are sometimes placed by court order in residential centers for youth on probation. Children placed in such facilities may not receive appropriate treatment.(1) In addition, the Government of Mauritius does not fund or participate in programs to address child labor in agriculture, domestic work, or street work.

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 Mauritius (Table 9).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase the number of training, human resources, and funding of agencies responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor in order to provide adequate coverage of the workforce.	2011 – 2014
	Collect and make publicly available information on the type and notification system for labor inspections and the number of citations and penalties assessed, as well as the number of criminal investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and sentences related to the worst forms of child labor.	2014
	Collect and make publicly available information on the number of calls received on child protection hotlines and disaggregate such complaints.	2014
	Strengthen efforts to enforce anti-trafficking law and increase anti-trafficking in persons training for government officials.	2010 – 2014
Coordination	Streamline coordination across agencies, including by ensuring effective coordination between the NCPC and the NCC.	2012 – 2014
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing policies.	2010 – 2014
	Adopt a more comprehensive policy that addresses the worst forms of child labor.	2014
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the prevalence of child labor in Mauritius to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2014
	Expand the scope of programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including in domestic work, agriculture, and street work.	2014
	Take measures to ensure children's safety in schools.	2014
	Assess the impact that existing programs may have on addressing child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2014
	Ensure that victims of commercial sexual exploitation have access to comprehensive, quality services; and refrain from placing victims in facilities designed for youth on probation.	2010 – 2014

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