

In 2015, Venezuela made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government adopted the XIX Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor Plan of Action prioritizing the elimination of child labor and maintained policies and programs that aim to alleviate poverty and improve conditions for some working children. However, children in Venezuela are engaged in child labor, including in domestic work. Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The Government has not made a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children publicly available, and does not make information on the enforcement of child labor laws publicly available. In addition, information is not available on the effectiveness of the Government's coordinating body on child labor, and the Government does not have sufficient efforts in place to protect children in key sectors where child labor is prevalent.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Venezuela are engaged in child labor, including in domestic work. Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.(1-7) The Government's 2011 census found approximately 262,000 children and adolescents between ages 10 and 17 working in Venezuela, but research could not determine the extent to which the survey encompassed the informal sector or whether there are studies that target the worst forms of child labor.(8) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Venezuela.

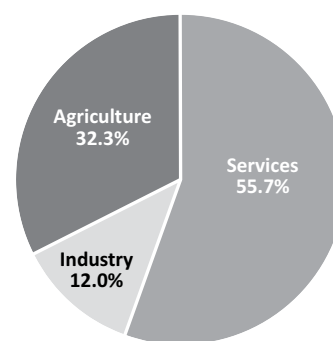
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10-14 yrs.	5.1 (138,641)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	96.0
Combining Work and School (%)	10-14 yrs.	4.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		96.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2014, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(9)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Encuesta de Hogares por Muestreo (EHM), 2006.(10)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



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	Clearing land,* planting,* fumigating,*and harvesting* (11)
	Tending and grazing livestock,* cleaning corrals* (11, 12)
	Fishing,* including processing ark clams* (11, 12)
Industry	Mining, including gold mining* (5, 7, 13-15)
	Manufacturing,* activities unknown (16)
Services	Domestic work (5, 6, 13, 17-19)
	Street work, including vending, collecting bus and taxi fares,* and motorbike couriering* (5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15, 20, 21)
	Construction assistance, including lifting and carrying heavy materials (12, 14, 15)
	Carrying bags and pushing carts in supermarkets* (12)
	Garbage scavenging* and recycling* (20, 22)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work and begging (2, 4-6, 13-15, 23-25)
	Selling drugs, sometimes as a result of forced labor (13-15)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-7, 24, 26, 27)

* 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 are sometimes trafficked to urban areas, such as Caracas and Maracaibo, or to resort destinations, such as Margarita Island, for commercial sexual exploitation.(3, 4, 7, 24, 25) Indigenous children work in illegal gold mines in the Upper Orinoco, Casiquiare, and Guainia-Rio Negro river basins and are vulnerable to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.(7) Civil society groups estimate that more than 200,000 children are exploited by criminal organizations, and more than one million children work in the informal sector.(15)

Children from rural areas, indigenous children, Afro-descendant children, children with disabilities, pregnant girls, and adolescent mothers face barriers to accessing education; many students stop their formal education after completing the ninth grade.(3, 6, 28) Although Article 6.2.k. of the Education Law guarantees that no student’s academic documents may be withheld, according to NGOs, Colombian children living in Venezuela without a Venezuelan identification card are sometimes prevented from receiving diplomas, certifications, and credentials from formal educational institutions.(6, 29, 30) These children may be vulnerable to labor exploitation due to their irregular migration status. The practice of withholding their academic documents may discourage them from completing their education, increasing their vulnerability to labor exploitation.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Venezuela 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	14	Article 32 of the Labor Law; Article 96 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (31, 32)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 96 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Articles 79 and 80 of the Regulations on Occupational Safety and Health Conditions (32, 33)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Article 96 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Articles 79 and 80 of the Regulations on Occupational Safety and Health Conditions (32, 33)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 30 of the Labor Law; Articles 38, 40, 231, 232, and 266–268 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Article 54 of the Constitution; Article 41 of the Law Against Organized Crime and Terrorism; Articles 55 and 56 of the Law for Women’s Right to a Life Free from Violence (31, 32, 34-36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 40, 231, 232, and 266–268 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Article 54 of the Constitution; Article 41 of the Law Against Organized Crime and Terrorism; Articles 55 and 56 of the Law for Women’s Right to a Life Free from Violence (32, 34-36)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 33 and 258 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Articles 46–49 of the Law Against Organized Crime and Terrorism; Article 56 of the Law for Women’s Right to a Life Free from Violence; Article 24 of the Special Law Against Cyber crimes (32, 35-37)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 264 and 265 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Article 38 of the Drug Act (32, 38)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 4 of the Partial Reform of the Military Enlistment Law (39)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 53 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Articles 102 and 103 of the Constitution; Articles 3 and 6 of the Education Law (15, 30, 32, 34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 53 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Article 102 of the Constitution; Articles 3 and 6 of the Education Law (30, 32, 34)

* No conscription (34, 39)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (15, 30, 32, 34)

Venezuela’s Constitution establishes compulsory education for all children from preschool through grade nine. (15, 30, 32, 34)

The Government has not made publicly available a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children under age 18.(1, 14, 40, 41) Articles 79 and 80 of the Regulations on Occupational Safety and Health Conditions prohibit activities considered dangerous or unhealthy for children under age 18, but reference a list that is not included in the publicly available version of the Regulations. Similarly, Article 96 of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents prohibits children under age 18 from working in activities prohibited by law, but does not specify which activities are considered hazardous or prohibited for minors.(32, 33)

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
Ministry of Popular Power for Labor and Social Security (MINPPTRASS)	Enforce child labor laws and conduct child labor inspections in formal and informal business sectors. Develop policies and projects regarding child labor.(14, 20, 42)
National Institute for Prevention, Safety, and Health at Work (INPSASEL)	Assist MINPPTRASS in enforcing labor laws and conditions of work in Venezuela, including by conducting child labor inspections in formal and informal business sectors. Help develop labor inspection apparatus and implement national labor policies.(14, 43)
Municipal Councils for the Protection of Children and Adolescents	Manage MINPPTRASS Registry for Adolescent Workers to ensure that employed students of legal working age balance their education and employment and that employers adhere to labor laws.(15)

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Popular Power of the Interior, Justice, and Peace (MPPRIJP)	Investigate human trafficking cases through its Criminal Investigative Division and its Scientific, Penal, and Criminal Investigative Corps (CICPC). Role of CICPC is to help enforce laws related to commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities.(14)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Venezuela took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms, in 2015 (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (14)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (14)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Dedicated Inspectors	Unknown (14)	Unknown
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown	Unknown
Training for Labor Inspectors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initial Training for New Employees ■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor ■ Refresher Courses Provided 	Unknown Unknown Unknown	Unknown Unknown Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number Conducted at Worksite ■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews 	Unknown (14) Unknown (14)	Unknown Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (14)	Unknown* (15)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected 	Unknown (14) Unknown (14)	Unknown* (15) Unknown* (15)
Routine Inspections Conducted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Routine Inspections Targeted 	Unknown (14) Unknown (14)	Unknown Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Unknown

*The Government does not make this information publicly available.

NGOs have expressed concerns that the Government does not effectively monitor employed youth of legal working age to ensure that their employment does not negatively impact their education and that they are not exploited by employers.(15)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Venezuela took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor in 2015 (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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initial Training for New Employees ■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor ■ Refresher Courses Provided 	Unknown Unknown Unknown	Unknown Unknown Unknown
Number of Investigations	Unknown (14)	Unknown* (15)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (14)	Unknown* (15)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (14)	Unknown* (25)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (14)	Unknown* (25)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (25)	Unknown (25)

*The Government does not make this information publicly available.

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 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents	Coordinate and protect children's rights and address child labor issues through policies and programs at the national and state levels. Comprised of several government ministries, government councils, and representatives from civil society and mandated by the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents.(32, 44)

Although the Government has established the System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, this body does not provide adequate coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of institutions to ensure that children are protected from the worst forms of child labor, and research could not determine to what extent the body was active during the reporting period.(7) The Ministry of Popular Power for Labor and Social Security's ability to address exploitative child labor is limited because government offices at the municipal and national levels do not share information sufficiently with each other.(15) Research could not determine whether the Government maintains a coordinating body that addresses the trafficking of children, including for commercial sexual exploitation.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Declaration of the Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor (2014–2020)	Seeks to increase regional cooperation on eradicating child labor by 2020 through the signatories' efforts to strengthen monitoring and coordination mechanisms, government programs, and South-South exchanges. Reaffirms commitments made in the Brasilia Declaration from the Third Global Conference on Child Labor (October 2013), and signed by Venezuela at the ILO's 18th Regional Meeting of the Americas in Lima, Peru (October 2014).(45, 46)
Declaration of Cancún and Plan of Action (2015)†	In 2015, the Government of Venezuela participated in the XIX Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor to promote decent work with social inclusion throughout the Americas, held in Cancún, Mexico. Participating countries adopted the declaration, which aims in part to foster policies to eliminate labor exploitation, including child labor, and to promote education and vocational training for youth.(47, 48) Participating countries also adopted the Plan of Action, which prioritizes the elimination of child labor, including through data collection, enforcement of labor laws, and the development of social protection policies for children and families.(47, 49)
MERCOSUR Social Labor Declaration of 2015†	Aims to promote decent work and sustainable development in the five member states of MERCOSUR, in part through commitments to uphold core labor standards, including the elimination of forced labor, the prevention and elimination of child labor, and the protection of adolescent work. Signed in Brasilia, Brazil in July 2015.(50, 51)
Second Presidential Declaration on the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor in MERCOSUR (2012)	Promotes greater coordination between governmental agencies, levels of government, and with civil society among MERCOSUR members.(52, 53)
MERCOSUR's Southern Child Initiative	Aims to defend the rights of children and adolescents in the region by raising awareness and seeking coordination among member states regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking and pornography, child labor, and migrant labor. Improves country legal frameworks to harmonize them with international conventions affecting children, and facilitates exchange of best practices.(54–56)
National Plan of Action Against Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation	Addresses the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation of children under age 18 and the rehabilitation of victims.(57)
Second Socialist Plan for the Economic and Social Development of the Nation (2013–2019)*	Provides a roadmap for reducing poverty by improving economic opportunity, access to health care, education, and housing.(58)

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

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

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Although the Government of Venezuela has adopted poverty reduction strategies, as well as policies that target the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, research did not find evidence of a national policy that targeted other forms of child labor, such as domestic work and street work.(7)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Venezuela 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
Children of the Barrio Mission (<i>Misión Niños del Barrio</i>)†	National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (IDENA)-administered program that provides services to at-risk and underprivileged children, including child laborers. Primary goal is to eradicate exploitation, abuse, and psychological and physical mistreatment of children from birth to age 17.(8, 20, 59)
Negra Hipólita Mission (<i>Misión Negra Hipólita</i>)†	Government program that provides assistance to vulnerable groups, including street children.(60) Assists children engaged in child labor, including those working at garbage collection sites and on the street.(61) In 2015, 14 out of 38 centers were closed and approximately 200 people received benefits from the remaining centers.(15)
Program to Dignify Working Children and Adolescents†	IDENA-administered program that aims to eradicate exploitative working conditions and establish safe business environments in which children above the legal age may work.(14, 40, 62)
Regional Action Group for the Americas (<i>Grupo de Acción Regional para las Américas</i>)	Conducts prevention and awareness-raising campaigns to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Latin America. Members include Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.(63, 64)
Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign†	Government program to raise public awareness of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation through the dissemination of public service announcements, advertisements, posters, and pamphlets in airports and tourist areas.(25)
Communal Centers for Comprehensive Care†	IDENA-supervised centers that provide meals and educational assistance to at-risk children from birth to age 12. Also partners with the Ministry of Popular Power, Health, and Social Development to provide medical and dental care to children.(65)
National Day Camps†	IDENA-administered program under the Community Vacation Plan that provides summer day camps to children, with a focus on athletic, artistic, and cultural activities.(8, 14, 15)

† Program is funded by the Government of Venezuela.

During 2015, the Government maintained programs that aim to alleviate poverty and improve conditions for some working children. However, research indicates that the Program to Dignify Working Children and Adolescents has limited efficacy due to a continued lack of governmental funding.(14) While the Ministry of Popular Power for Interior and Justice and the Child Protection Council have trained psychologists and physicians to provide psychological and medical examinations to victims of human trafficking, follow-up social services to assist victims are limited.(25) Overall, existing government programs are insufficient to protect children in key sectors in which child labor is prevalent.

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 Venezuela (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Make publicly available a comprehensive list of hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	2009, 2011 – 2015
Enforcement	Ensure that all children without identifying documentation receive their diplomas, certifications, and credentials in the formal education system.	2015
	Ensure that all children are able to obtain identity documents to increase their access to education and reduce their vulnerability to labor exploitation.	2015

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms (cont)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Make publicly available information on the labor inspectorate's funding; the number of labor inspectors; whether the inspectorate is authorized to assess penalties; the training system for labor inspectors; the number of labor inspections conducted at worksites and by desk review; the number of child labor violations found and for which penalties were imposed and collected; whether inspections are routine and targeted; whether unannounced inspections are permitted and conducted; complaint and referral mechanisms; and the number of criminal investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2015
	Effectively monitor employed youth of legal working age to ensure their employment does not negatively impact their education or place them in a worst form of child labor.	2015
Coordination	Ensure that the System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents provides adequate coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of institutions to protect children from the worst forms of child labor and make information on the activities of this body publicly available.	2013 – 2015
	Strengthen information sharing and coordination between municipal and national government agencies to protect children from the worst forms of child labor.	2015
	Publish information about any coordinating mechanism that addresses the trafficking of children, including for commercial sexual exploitation.	2013 – 2015
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Second Socialist Plan for the Economic and Social Development of the Nation.	2009 – 2015
	Adopt a national policy that addresses all relevant forms of child labor, including domestic work and street work.	2013 – 2015
Social Programs	Ensure that child labor censuses cover all children under age 18 in both the formal and informal economy, and make the results publicly available.	2010 – 2015
	Conduct and make publicly available research on the worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2011, 2013 – 2015
	Implement programs to ensure school enrollment and prevent dropout, particularly targeting children from vulnerable groups such as indigenous children, Afro-descendant children, and children with disabilities.	2015
	Increase funding and follow-up services for existing social programs and implement additional programs to specifically address the worst forms of child labor, including domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2015

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- to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics on children's work in general are reported in this chart, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section of this report.
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