

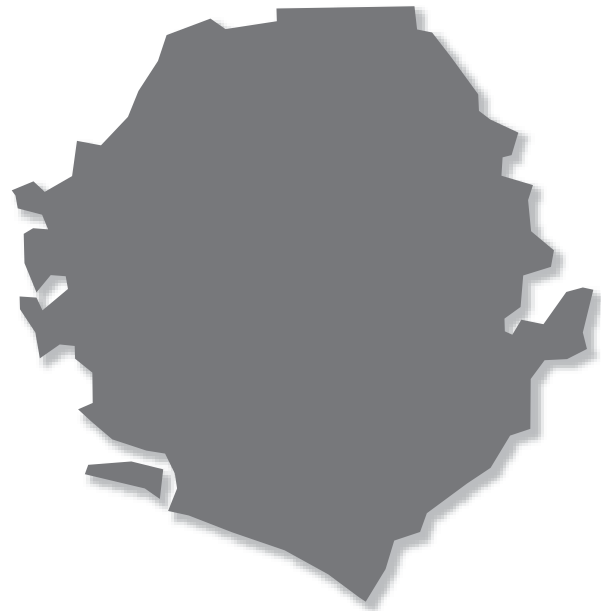
Sierra Leone

The Government of Sierra Leone participates in donor-funded social protection programs for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. However, the worst forms of child labor continue to exist especially in agriculture, mining, fishing, and domestic work. Significant gaps remain in the enforcement of child labor laws.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	58.5*
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	67.8
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs	44.0

* Population of working children: 977,088



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor⁵¹⁸⁶

Children in Sierra Leone are engaged in the worst forms of child labor,⁵¹⁸⁷ particularly in agriculture and mining. Reports indicate that child labor in agriculture is pervasive in rural areas, with children as young as age 5 working in the fields.⁵¹⁸⁸ Children working in agriculture may be exposed to chemicals, injured by dangerous machinery or tools and suffer physical harm from repetitive motions and carrying heavy loads.⁵¹⁸⁹

Thousands of children in Sierra Leone, primarily boys between ages 10 and 17, labor in alluvial diamond mines.⁵¹⁹⁰ Alluvial diamond mining relies on labor-intensive methods to locate diamonds such as digging and sifting through mud and sand. The mining is usually performed by informal and small-scale mining operations that operate outside of the regulatory framework.⁵¹⁹¹

Children engaged in alluvial diamond mining undertake hazardous activities, such as repeatedly shoveling and transporting gravel, and are exposed to infectious and mosquito-borne diseases that thrive in alluvial mining areas. The children suffer

back and chest pain and fatigue as a result of the activities they perform.⁵¹⁹² Children also risk injury and death from mine pits collapsing.⁵¹⁹³

One study found that nearly half of all child miners in the Kono District, the hub of Sierra Leonean diamond mining, work 8 to 10 hours per day, while more than half work at least six days each week.⁵¹⁹⁴ Although mine owners and operators typically do not employ girls or children under age 10 in direct mining activities, the mining sector occupies these two groups in support roles. Young boys in this group generally provide food and water and take responsibility for less strenuous mining activities, while girls in support roles often work as vendors, hawking items such as drinks and cigarettes.⁵¹⁹⁵

Children in Sierra Leone are also engaged in stone crushing in granite quarries in unsafe and unhealthy labor conditions, including carrying heavy loads and working long hours.⁵¹⁹⁶ In large dumpsites in Freetown, children as young as age 10 are engaged in digging and gathering metal scraps, among other items. Reports indicate that more than 50 children frequent the dumpsites on a daily basis.⁵¹⁹⁷ These children are exposed

to unhealthy and hazardous labor conditions, including chemicals, and risk injury.⁵¹⁹⁸

Children are also engaged in the fishing industry and, while evidence is limited, there is reason to believe that the worst forms of child labor are used in the production of particular types of fish, including snapper, mackerel and herring.⁵¹⁹⁹ Reports note that in addition to performing tasks such as mending nets, children engaged in the fishing industry also labor on boats that fish in the open sea for several days in a row.⁵²⁰⁰ Fishing exposes children to risks, including risk of drowning and working in cramped and insalubrious shipping vessels.

Sierra Leonean children are engaged in street vending. Some adults use children to steal or to beg.⁵²⁰¹ Children working on the streets may be exposed to multiple dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements. Even further, street children are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation cities such as Freetown and Bo.⁵²⁰²

Some reports indicate that children are engaged in domestic labor, which commonly involves long hours and exposure to physical and sexual exploitation by their employers.⁵²⁰³

Sierra Leone is a source, transit and destination country for children and women trafficked for the purpose of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.⁵²⁰⁴ The majority of the trafficked victims are children trafficked from rural provinces or refugee communities to urban and mining areas.⁵²⁰⁵ During the reporting period, eight child trafficking victims were repatriated from Guinea, back to their homes in Sierra Leone.⁵²⁰⁶ While statistics on trafficking are limited, a UNICEF report published in 2005 indicated that child trafficking occurs “quite frequently.”⁵²⁰⁷





Sierra Leone was engaged in an 11-year civil war that ended in 2002, which left many children

vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. One of the side effects of the war is a large number of street children who are engaged in the worst forms of child labor.⁵²⁰⁸

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

During the year, the Government of Sierra Leone ratified two key child labor conventions: 138 (minimum age for work) and 182 (worst forms of child labor).⁵²⁰⁹

The Child Rights Act, enacted in 2007, sets the minimum age for employment at 15. The law also states that children must be age 15 or have completed basic education (whichever is later) before entering into an apprenticeship in either the formal or informal sector.⁵²¹⁰ Children are also prohibited from performing night work between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.⁵²¹¹

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	No
	Minimum Age for Work	15
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

The law allows children age 13 and older to engage in light work and prohibits children under age 18 from being employed in hazardous work, defined as work that is dangerous to a child’s health,

safety or morals. The law identifies the following activities as hazardous: seafaring; mining and quarrying; carrying heavy loads; working in bars; working in places where machines are used; and working in environments where chemicals are produced or used.⁵²¹² Any person who violates the age restrictions within the Child Rights Act could face 2 years of imprisonment and/or a fine.⁵²¹³

The Constitution of Sierra Leone prohibits forced and compulsory labor.⁵²¹⁴ The Anti-Human Trafficking Act criminalizes all forms of human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including profiting from child pornography and prostitution.⁵²¹⁵ The Child Rights Act stipulates that the government will intervene to protect children who are forced to beg or are exposed to moral or physical danger. The age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces is 18.⁵²¹⁶

Some of the labor penal codes in Sierra Leone are outdated; therefore, their prescribed penalties do not commiserate with the severity of the crimes.⁵²¹⁷

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Child Rights Act established an interagency exchange of information coordinating role for the Commission for Children.⁵²¹⁸ However, the Government had not yet established the Commission by the end of 2010, and research has not uncovered evidence that the Government of Sierra Leone has established a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.⁵²¹⁹

The Child Protection Unit of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MOSWGCA) has the primary responsibility for protecting children. District labor officers are responsible for initial investigations and enforcement of child labor provisions in the Child Rights Act at the district level, and the District Councils are responsible for the enforcement in

the informal sector. Following an investigation, labor officers and district councils refer cases to the police for possible prosecution.⁵²²⁰

The Ministry of Labor also enforces child labor laws and employs 10 labor inspectors to investigate child labor abuses.⁵²²¹ Due to the Government's funding limitations, the inspectors lack adequate equipment and transportation.⁵²²² The Ministry of Labor has also taken steps to establish a Child Labor Unit, although research indicates that the unit is still not operational. After gathering evidence in child labor investigations, the Ministry of Labor hands cases over to the police for possible action.⁵²²³

The Ministry of Mineral Resources, charged with enforcing regulations against the use of child labor in mining activities, has 300 to 400 monitors in the field who sometimes intervene if child labor is found.⁵²²⁴ Although the Ministry has the ability to suspend the licenses of mining operators who engage in child labor, evidence suggests that the Ministry has failed to implement this provision.⁵²²⁵ In addition, many local community leaders and chiefs have enacted mechanisms to punish and deter violations—with varying success.⁵²²⁶ Research could not identify the number of inspections or prosecutions (if any) for child labor violations during the reporting period.⁵²²⁷ Nevertheless, research indicates that the Government has not effectively enforced laws against child labor or against forced and bonded child labor.⁵²²⁸

The Government has established a task force, led by the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts and an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trafficking co-chaired by the Ministry of Justice and MOSWGCA.⁵²²⁹ It includes the Ministries of Education, Internal Affairs, Information, Labor, Health, Foreign Affairs, Local Government, Youth and Tourism.⁵²³⁰ Research has not uncovered the effectiveness of the coordination mechanism.

In 2004, the Government of Sierra Leone also established the Human Rights Commission, which aims to coordinate efforts to protect and promote human rights through awareness-raising; monitor and investigate complaints regarding human rights violations; and produce and publish annual reports. Research has not identified activities undertaken by the Commission during the reporting period or uncovered the effectiveness of the coordination mechanism.⁵²³¹

The Government of Sierra Leone continued to support to the Special Court of Sierra Leone established by the Government of Sierra Leone and the UN and was mandated to try human rights violation cases that occurred since 1996.⁵²³² During the year, the prosecution continued of Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia and leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia rebel group. The list of charges includes war crimes, crimes against humanity and other international humanitarian law violations as well as the procurement and use of child soldiers in Liberia and Sierra Leone.⁵²³³

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Child Rights Act expresses the Government's formal policy on child labor.⁵²³⁴ The Government's 2008-2012 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper includes policies to fight child labor by achieving universal primary education and by preventing the employment of children in the mining sector.⁵²³⁵ In addition, the Government of Sierra Leone has an Education Sector Plan (2007–20015) and a UN Development Assistance Framework (2008–2010).⁵²³⁶ Research could not identify plans to monitor the effects of these policies on the prevalence of the worst forms of child labor.

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

During the year, the Government of Sierra Leone started undertaking a National Child Labor Survey, with support from the ILO. The survey report could be released in June 2011.⁵²³⁷

The Government participated in Countering Youth and Child Labor through Education (CYCLE), a four-year, \$6 million DOL-funded regional project in Sierra Leone and Liberia.⁵²³⁸ An independent evaluation of the project concluded that CYCLE removed tens of thousands of children in both countries from the worst forms of child labor. Specific activities within the framework of CYCLE included enrolling children in public and private schools or vocational training institutions; raising awareness about the positive effects of education and the perils of the worst forms of child labor; and building government and civil society capacity to continue child labor initiatives.⁵²³⁹

In addition, during the reporting period, the Government of Sierra Leone continued to participate in the 4-year, EU-funded, TACKLE project. The project funding level is \$21.1 million and aims to combat child labor through education in Sierra Leone, along with 10 other countries.⁵²⁴⁰ TACKLE also has the objective of strengthening the government's capacity to implement and enforce policies to prevent child labor.⁵²⁴¹

Nevertheless, the Government's investment in social programs continues to be insufficient to address the scope of child labor in Sierra Leone, particularly among children working in agriculture, mining, fishing and domestic labor sectors.

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Sierra Leone:

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Update labor penal codes to ensure that penalties commiserate with the severity of violations.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor such as in mining and agriculture sectors.
- Fully establish the National Commission for Children and Child Labor Unit.
- Increase the Ministry of Labor's efforts to enforce worst forms of child labor laws and appropriately fund labor inspectors.
- Ensure the Ministry of Mineral Resources revokes the licenses of operators who employ child labor.
- Step up efforts to enforce child labor and forced labor laws.
- Make available data on child labor inspections and prosecutions.

IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Monitor implementation of policies and make the data available, including the data from the National Labor Survey.

IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS:

- Develop and provide funding for social programs to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in agriculture, mining, fishing and domestic labor sectors.

⁵¹⁸⁶ Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates, 2005-2010*. Data on working children and children combining working and schooling are from 2005. Data on school attendance are from 2006. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section, 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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