

In 2015, Sri Lanka made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government ratified the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and launched the Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor II project. However, children in Sri Lanka are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and in domestic work. There are no laws regulating employment in third-party households, which leaves children ages 14 to 18 employed as domestic workers vulnerable to exploitation. The Government's enforcement efforts also continued to be weak, particularly with regards to hazardous child labor.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Sri Lanka are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and domestic work.(1, 2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Sri Lanka.

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

| Children                      | Age       | Percent       |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Working (% and population)    | 5-14 yrs. | 9.2 (302,865) |
| Attending School (%)          | 5-14 yrs. | 97.8          |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7-14 yrs. | 10.4          |
| Primary Completion Rate (%)   |           | 98.0          |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2014, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(3)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Child Activity Survey, 2008–2009.(4)

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**

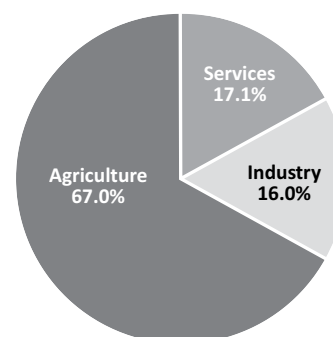
| Sector/Industry                         | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Agriculture                             | Farming,* activities unknown (1, 2)<br>Fishing* (2, 5)                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Industry                                | Manufacturing,* activities unknown (1, 2)<br>Mining,*† including gem mining*† (2, 6, 7)<br>Construction,* activities unknown (2, 8)<br>Production of fireworks*† (9)                                                                                                   |
| Services                                | Domestic work* (2, 10, 11)<br>Transportation,* activities unknown (2, 8)<br>Street vending* and begging* (2, 8)                                                                                                                                                        |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1, 2, 12)<br>Forced labor in domestic work* and begging,* each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2, 13)<br>Forced labor in farming,* fish-drying,* and fireworks* production (12) |

\* 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.

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



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There are reports of children being employed as domestic workers due to debt bondage and of children from tea estates being trafficked internally to perform domestic work in Colombo, for which their payments are withheld and movements are restricted.(2, 12) Some child domestic workers are subject to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.(2) There are reports that children are subjected to bonded labor and forced labor in farming.(12) Children, predominantly boys, are trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation in coastal areas as part of the sex tourism industry.(2, 12)




There is a lack of current data on child labor, particularly in the agricultural sector and in manufacturing; there is also a lack of data on child labor in the Northern Province, which was excluded from the Government's 2008/2009 Child Activity Survey because of civil conflict in the region.(14) However, in 2015, the Department of Census and Statistics launched a new Child Labor Survey that will cover all the provinces, including the Northern Province. The results are expected to be released in 2016.(15)

Most children in Sri Lanka have access to basic education.(3) However, barriers to accessing education include difficulties traveling to school in some regions, lack of sanitation and clean water, and an inadequate supply of teachers. This is particularly true in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, which have been affected by the civil conflict that ended in 2009.(16)

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

Sri Lanka 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 |              |

On June 15, 2015, the Government of Sri Lanka ratified the 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  | Section 13 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (17)                                              |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work                                  | Yes    | 18  | Section 20A of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (17)                                             |
| Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children | Yes    |     | Section 31 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act; Hazardous Occupations Regulation No. 47 (17, 18) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor                                     | Yes    |     | Sections 358A, 360C, 360A(2), and 360A(4) of the Penal Code (19)                                                         |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking                                | Yes    |     | Sections 360C, 360A(2), and 360A(4) of the Penal Code (19)                                                               |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children       | Yes    |     | Sections 286A, 360B, 360A(2), and 360A(4) of the Penal Code (19)                                                         |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities             | Yes    |     | Sections 288, 288A, 288B, and 360C of the Penal Code (19)                                                                |
| Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment                 | N/A*   |     |                                                                                                                          |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service                      | Yes    | 18  | Section 31 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act (18)                                              |

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

| Standard                 | Yes/No | Age | Related Legislation                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|--------|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes    | 14  | Section 43 of the Education Ordinance; Compulsory Attendance of Children at Schools Regulation (20, 21) |
| Free Public Education    | Yes    |     | Section 47 of the Education Ordinance (20)                                                              |

\*No conscription (22)

There are no laws regulating employment in third-party households, leaving children ages 14 to 18 who are employed as domestic workers vulnerable to exploitation.(10, 11)

### 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 Labor and Trade<br>Union Relations          | Enforce child labor laws and receive public complaints of child labor filed in national and district-level offices. Refer cases involving the worst forms of child labor to the police and National Child Protection Authority (NCPA).(23) Conducts special investigations in relation to child labor through the Women and Children's Affairs Division. (24)                 |
| Children and Women's Bureau<br>of the Sri Lankan Police | Enforce laws on child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and the use of children in illicit activities.(8)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| NCPA Special Police<br>Investigation Unit               | Inspect premises, interrogate people, and seize property suspected to be involved with child abuse, including unlawful child labor.(8, 25)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Department of Probation and<br>Child Care Services      | Coordinate services for child victims of forced labor, human trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation who have been referred to the Department of Probation and Child Care Services by the police and the court. Refer children to centers that provide shelter, medical and legal services, psychological counseling, and life and vocational skills training.(26-28) |

#### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2015, labor law enforcement agencies in Sri Lanka 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      | Unknown      |
| Number of Labor Inspectors                                                         | 428 (29)     | 389 (24)     |
| Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties                                        | No (17)      | No (17)      |
| Training for Labor Inspectors                                                      |              |              |
| ■ Initial Training for New Employees                                               | Unknown      | Unknown      |
| ■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor                                      | N/A          | N/A          |
| ■ Refresher Courses Provided                                                       | Yes (29)     | Yes (24)     |
| Number of Labor Inspections                                                        | 8,300 (30)   | 57,265 (24)  |
| ■ Number Conducted at Worksite                                                     | Unknown      | Unknown      |
| ■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews                                                 | Unknown      | Unknown      |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found                                             | 133 (30)     | 129 (24)     |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed                  | 9 (30)       | 2 (24)       |
| ■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected                                  | 1 (30)       | Unknown      |
| Routine Inspections Conducted                                                      | Yes (31, 32) | Yes (31, 32) |
| ■ Routine Inspections Targeted                                                     | Yes (31, 32) | Yes (31, 32) |
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted                                                  | Yes (17)     | Yes (17)     |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted                                                  | Unknown      | Yes (33, 34) |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists                                                         | Yes (35)     | Yes (35)     |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | Yes (35)     | Yes (35)     |

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Since the nationwide implementation of the Labor Inspection System Application in 2014, the labor inspectorate has increased its capacity to reliably and accurately collect data on the labor inspections that are conducted.(36)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

In 2015, criminal law enforcement agencies in Sri Lanka 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  | Unknown  |
| ■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor                      | N/A      | N/A      |
| ■ Refresher Courses Provided                                                          | Yes (9)  | Unknown  |
| Number of Investigations                                                              | Unknown  | Unknown  |
| Number of Violations Found                                                            | 6 (30)   | Unknown  |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated                                                      | 5 (30)   | Unknown  |
| Number of Convictions                                                                 | Unknown  | Unknown  |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | Yes (37) | Yes (37) |

The Children and Women’s Bureau of the Sri Lankan Police (CWBSLP) is staffed by 45 officers in 36 of the country’s 460 police stations. In police stations without CWBSLP representation, the officer in charge oversees all the functions of the CWBSLP.(8) The National Child Protection Authority Special Police Investigating Unit has approximately 40 police officers who investigate complaints involving children, including child labor. The agency also has approximately 250 child protection officers based in the districts who are tasked with preventing child exploitation and victim protection.(8, 29) Both the CWBSLP and the National Child Protection Authority face a shortage of funds that affects their ability to carry out their mandate.(8)

The Government of Sri Lanka has committed to investigating allegations of previous recruitment and use of children in armed conflict by non-state armed forces. Although some recruiters of child soldiers were killed during the conflict, research has found no evidence of prosecutions and convictions of living recruiters who violated the law on children and armed conflict.(38-40)

## 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 & Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Steering Committee on Child Labor | Coordinate the implementation of the Roadmap to End the Worst Forms of Child Labor, the Government’s key policy document for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by the Secretary of MOLLR and includes representatives from key government agencies, employer and workers’ organizations, ILO, UNICEF, and NGOs.(23) In 2015, the National Steering Committee on Child Labor drafted an action plan for eliminating child labor through educational achievement and submitted it to the Ministry of Education for approval.(24) |
| National Child Protection Authority        | Coordinate and monitor activities related to the protection of children, including activities to combat the worst forms of child labor. Consult with the relevant government ministries, local governments, employers, and NGOs, and recommend policies and actions to prevent and protect children from abuse and exploitation.(41)                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| National Anti-Trafficking Task Force       | Coordinate interagency efforts to address all human trafficking issues, including commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Led by the Ministry of Justice and includes representatives from a range of government agencies, including the Ministry of Social Services, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Labor Secretariat, NCPA, Department of Probation and Child Care, Police Criminal Division, and Bureau for the Prevention of Abuse to Women and Children.(13)                                                                        |

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

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

**Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor**

| Policy                                                                                     | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sri Lanka's Roadmap 2016 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2011–2016)                     | Specifies time-bound goals, including developing or strengthening, or both, the management, coordination, implementation, resource mobilization, and reporting of programs that will lead to the elimination of the worst forms of child labor by 2016.(42) Provides district-level mainstreaming strategies to address specific sectors of child labor, including armed conflict, plantations, fisheries, and tourism. Outlines strategies to include child labor issues within social protection and education goals. (42) |
| National Human Resources and Employment Policy for Sri Lanka                               | Provides an overarching umbrella framework to several existing national policies related to employment and human resources formulated by different ministries. Sets the elimination of child labor in hazardous activities as a priority and goal of zero tolerance for the worst forms of child labor by 2016.(43)                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| National Plan of Action on Anti-Human Trafficking                                          | Plans the implementation of anti-human trafficking activities for each member of the Anti-Trafficking Task Force on an annual basis.(44)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Standard Operating Procedures for the Identification and Protection of Trafficking Victims | Guides all government agencies, especially the police, in the procedures for identifying and protecting victims of human trafficking, convicting offenders, and providing assistance and reintegration services. (37) In 2015, police units and officers of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs received training on the standard operating procedures for referrals and case management for victims of human trafficking.(13)                                                                                           |
| National Education Sector Development Framework and Program II (2012–2016)*                | Aims to increase the equitable access, quality, and delivery of education. Supports accelerated learning and non-formal education for dropouts from the formal education system.(45, 46)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

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

The Government has not yet approved the draft National Child Protection Policy. This policy is intended to ensure effective coordination among all organizations and individuals working for the protection and development of children in Sri Lanka. It also outlines key policy recommendations, including strengthening and expanding non-formal education opportunities for vulnerable children (including child laborers) in geographic locations with the highest concentrations of vulnerable households.(47) It recommends measures to prevent and eliminate the trafficking of children, including through improved detection and identification of traffickers and victims, and to provide greater protections to child victims.(47)

In 2014, the National Steering Committee on Child Labor drafted a new national child labor policy, with technical assistance from the ILO; however, information on the current status of the draft policy is unavailable.(30) The draft policy aims to end the worst forms of child labor by 2016 through a variety of activities, including effective enforcement of relevant laws and the integration of child labor into key development policies and programs.(8)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Sri Lanka 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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Child Labor Free Zone by 2016†           | Local government initiatives that seek to eliminate child labor through the identification of children engaged in child labor, a rehabilitation program, assistance to families of children at risk of engaging in child labor, and an awareness-raising campaign. Operated by the district secretariats, with assistance from MOLLR, and with technical and financial support from the ILO.(48) The program was piloted in Ratnapura in 2013, and expanded to the Kegalle and Ampara districts in 2014.(48-51) |
| Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking | IOM-funded Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs shelter that provides victims of human trafficking, including children, with safe shelter and access to medical, psychological, and legal assistance. In 2015, staff members received training on the standard operating procedures for identifying and protecting human trafficking victims and the newly established shelter guidelines.(13, 37)                                                                                                 |

**Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor (cont)**

| Program                                                                      | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor II (CLEAR II)* | USDOL-funded capacity building project implemented by Winrock International and partners Verité and Lawyers Without Borders in at least 8 countries to build local and national capacity of the Government to address child labor. Aims to: (1) improve legislation addressing child labor issues, including by bringing local or national laws into compliance with international standards, (2) improve monitoring and enforcement of laws and policies related to child labor, (3) implement a National Action Plan on the elimination of child labor, and (4) enhance the implementation of national and local policies and programs aimed at the reduction and prevention of child labor in Sri Lanka.(52) |
| Decent Work Country Program (2013–2017)                                      | ILO technical assistance project detailing the policies, strategies, and results required to make progress toward the goal of decent work for all. Includes four strategies to reduce the worst forms of child labor: (1) capacity building for mainstreaming worst forms of child labor into sectorial plans and programs, (2) area-based integrated approach within districts, (3) strengthening institutional mechanisms for improved coordination and monitoring, and (4) development of a knowledge base for tracking progress.(53)                                                                                                                                                                        |
| UNDAF (2013–2017)                                                            | Agreement-tying UN assistance to Sri Lanka’s long-term development priorities, with the goal of sustainable and inclusive economic growth and with equitable access to quality social services, strengthened human capabilities, and reconciliation for lasting peace. Stipulates that UN agencies will support national efforts to strengthen justice for children and will achieve the goal of zero tolerance of the worst forms of child labor, including the trafficking of children for exploitative employment.(54)                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Transforming School Education                                                | A \$100-million, World Bank-financed, 5-year education project to support the Education Sector Development Framework and Program. Objectives include promoting access to primary and secondary education, improving the quality of education, and strengthening governance and delivery of education services.(55) Appoints school attendance committees to promote school enrollment and attendance; runs school nutrition and health programs.(23)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

\* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Sri Lanka.

## 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 Sri Lanka (Table 11).

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

| Area                | Suggested Action                                                                                                                                                                      | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Legal Framework     | Ensure that the legal framework includes protections for children engaged in domestic work.                                                                                           | 2010 – 2015       |
| Enforcement         | Publish information on labor law enforcement and criminal law enforcement actions.                                                                                                    | 2014 – 2015       |
|                     | Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for labor law violations.                                                                                                        | 2015              |
|                     | Provide additional funding for the CWBSLP and the NCPA to adequately investigate forced labor, child trafficking, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.                 | 2011 – 2015       |
|                     | Prosecute individuals who have violated laws related to children’s exploitation in armed conflict.                                                                                    | 2009 – 2015       |
| Government Policies | Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing education policies.                                                                                         | 2014 – 2015       |
| Social Programs     | Conduct research on child labor in the Northern Province and on the specific activities carried out by children, particularly those working in the farming and manufacturing sectors. | 2011 – 2015       |
|                     | Eliminate barriers to education, including difficulties with transportation to schools, lack of sanitation and clean water, and an inadequate supply of teachers.                     | 2012 – 2015       |

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<http://www.uis.unesco.org/pages/default.aspx?SPSLanguage=EN>. Data provided is the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary school. This measure is a proxy measure for primary completion. This ratio is the total number of new entrants in the last grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical entrance age to the last grade of primary. A high ratio indicates a high degree of current primary education completion. Because the calculation includes all new entrants to last grade (regardless of age), the ratio can exceed 100 percent, due to over-aged and under-aged children who enter primary school late/early and/or repeat grades. For more information, please see the “Children’s Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section of this report.



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