

In 2011, Armenia made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government enacted amendments to its Criminal Code to clarify legislation and strengthen punishments for child trafficking and exploitation. Gaps remain, however, in the establishment of a mechanism to coordinate child labor efforts across the government. Likewise, the Juvenile Police and State Labor Inspectors lack training focused on worst forms of child labor and there are gaps in programs to protect children from exploitative labor. Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor in the urban informal sector.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate		101.3

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2007, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children in Armenia are engaged in the worst forms of child labor in the urban informal sector.(3-5) A 2008 UNICEF report and other sources note that in urban areas, children engage in work activities that include construction, trade, car repair, scavenging for recyclables and other odd jobs. Some children conduct heavy manual work at the risk of long-term harmful health consequences.(4-6) Some children may miss school when working.(4, 5, 7) In addition, children in Armenia are engaged in seasonal agricultural work and may be exposed to dangerous tools and carry heavy loads.(8)

Some girls in Armenia are trafficked both internally and externally for sexual exploitation. Girls are subjected to sex trafficking in the United Arab Emirates. There are reports that boys are subjected to forced labor within the country, some in forced begging.(3, 4, 9, 10)



Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 16. However, children between ages 14 and 16 may work for limited hours if they have an employment agreement with written consent from a parent or legal guardian.(11) Children younger than age 18 are prohibited from engaging in hazardous work.(11) A 2005 governmental decree defines a list of works that qualify as hazardous for children under 18.(12)

Armenia's Constitution prohibits forced labor.(13) The minimum age for compulsory and voluntary recruitment into the military is 18.

The Criminal Code prohibits the trafficking and exploitation of all persons. In 2011, amendments to the Criminal Code clarified legislation and strengthened punishments for the exploitation and trafficking of persons, and for children in particular.(14) The newly enacted Article 132.2 prohibits the trafficking or exploitation of children specifically and strengthens penalties to seven to fifteen years in prison, depending on the aggravating circumstances.(14) Article 165 prohibits involving a minor in criminal activities with expanded penalties. Article 166 now separates the prohibitions against child pornography and prostitution from those against the involvement of minors in criminal and other illicit activities such as vagrancy and begging, and expands and clarifies both areas.(14) Article 168 prohibiting the buying or selling of a child has been replaced with an article that more

	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	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

comprehensively describes the crime and its penalties. The Criminal Code exempts trafficking victims from criminal prosecution for crimes of minor and medium severity committed as a direct result of being trafficked.(10, 14)

The Armenian Constitution guarantees free schooling for all children.(13) Currently, children in Armenia are required to attend school until age 15.(15) This standard makes children between the age of 15 and 16 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor as they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work either. Inequities in education in Armenia remain as a result of gender, geography and family income and compulsory education is not well enforced.(3, 16, 17)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Research found no evidence of a coordinating mechanism to combat worst forms of child labor.(4) Various agencies in Armenia are involved in child protection and an inter-agency National Committee for Child Protection is in place. During the reporting period, a Parliamentary Working Group on Child Rights was instituted to help the development of a child protection system and contribute to the strengthening of child rights institutions in Armenia.(18) The Government of Armenia's Council to Combat Human Trafficking, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, works at the ministerial level to coordinate government efforts to combat human trafficking, including that of children. On a lower level an inter-agency Working Group, chaired by the head of the International

Organizations Department at the Foreign Ministry, assumes this coordination responsibility.(19) The two anti-trafficking organizations met regularly throughout the year to share information and make policy decisions.

The Armenian State Labor Inspectorate (SLI), a unit of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA), is responsible for enforcing labor laws, including those concerning child labor. The SLI carries out inspections of registered legal entities.(19, 20) During the reporting period, the SLI employed 140 labor inspectors. According to an SLI official, this number is not sufficient to cover the hundreds of thousands of entities in the country and to make proactive investigations to identify exploitative child labor.(19, 20) The SLI does not have a specific mechanism for registering child labor complaints and since its inception in 2005, has not received any complaints of child labor or discovered violations through its regular inspections.(16, 19) During the reporting period, the ILO organized two trainings on forced labor and trafficking in persons for 55 SLI labor inspectors.(4) The SLI inspectors have not received specific training on child exploitation issues, except in the context of child trafficking.(16)

The Juvenile Police, and its regional subdivisions, investigate crimes committed by children and those in which children are involved. The Juvenile Police had about 280 investigators throughout the country.(4) The head of the Juvenile Police stated that the unit's inspectors monitored working children throughout the reporting period to make them aware of risks of exploitation, to ensure they attended school and to keep them from engaging in arduous manual labor.(21)

The Anti-Trafficking Unit of the National Police's Department of Criminal Investigation and the Police Investigatory Department's Unit to address Human Trafficking, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime are responsible for the investigation and enforcement of criminal laws against child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.(4) During the reporting period, the Anti-Trafficking Unit expanded from six to seven field officers and the Unit to address Human Trafficking, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime had 10 investigators who worked on trafficking as needed.(4) Employees of the police Anti-Trafficking Unit, the Unit to Combat Human Trafficking, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime and other police officers participated in anti-trafficking courses throughout the year. The head of the Juvenile Police expressed the need for training focused on child labor.(4) The Government implements a National Referral Mechanism to assist victims of trafficking, including children. In addition, a border control information system is in place at the main international airport to help prevent trafficking.(17)

Law enforcement investigated six criminal cases involving minors during the reporting period. The charges included trafficking in persons, forced labor, prostitution, pornography and exploitation of a minor in forced begging.(10, 21) Of these criminal cases, three were sent to court, one partially sent to court, another suspended and the status of one is unknown. Seventeen cases of involving minors in criminal activities were also investigated and included robbery, theft, squandering or embezzlement, hooliganism, illegal turnover of narcotic drugs or psychotropic materials with the purpose of sale and theft of state decorations.(21) In addition, a man was sentenced to 15 years in prison for having sexual relations with underage boys in Armenia to whom he paid thousands of dollars.(22)

Implementing the provisions of the Criminal Procedural Code on victim and witness protection has been difficult due to the lack of an appropriate victim-witness protection mechanism.(9, 10)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Plan of Action for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (NPA) 2004-2015 includes the elimination of child labor as one of its themes. The NPA targets the worst forms of child labor directly and indirectly through programs to combat child trafficking and sexual exploitation and improvements to the school system.(16, 17) However, there has been no progress on developing or implementing the programs envisioned in the plan.(4)

The Government of Armenia's National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2010-2012 addresses trafficking in children.(4) UNICEF has worked with the Government to develop a Country Program for 2010-2015 that includes an enhanced child care system, a continuum of child protection services to identify and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse of children, and to create a comprehensive policy framework for protecting vulnerable children.(23) The impact of these efforts on child labor has not been assessed.

The Government collects information on trafficking in children as part of its reporting on trafficking in persons.(4) However, there is insufficient data on all of the worst forms of child labor in Armenia which hampers the Government's ability to formulate relevant policies and programs.(16)

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

At the end of 2011, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) created two new staffing positions dedicated to anti-

trafficking issues in the Department of Family and Children. The new staff currently assist the lead expert in the Family and Children Department to improve assistance to trafficking victims.(10)

In 2011, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) continued to implement a regional project "Secondary School Education to Contribute to the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia". The project aimed to introduce a topic on counter-trafficking including child exploitation topics to the school curriculum. This year approximately 2,000 teachers from Yerevan and regions were trained on trafficking, as well as 200 faculty members of vocational schools and colleges.(8)

A Public Service Announcement (PSA) produced by an Armenia NGO was utilized throughout 2011 for training purposes. The PSA focuses on vulnerabilities related to child trafficking for forced labor, and the resulting hazards and criminal penalties.(24)

Armenia has participated in several donor-funded anti-poverty initiatives to help the most vulnerable populations. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) plan for Armenia (2010-2015) has a strong focus on developing vocational training and technical assistance programs targeted at the most vulnerable youth.(25) The Government is working with USAID to improve the well-being of the most vulnerable children by building the human resource and institutional capacity of the child protection system. The Stakeholders Acting Together for Strengthened Child Protection in Armenia is a three year project with a combined budget of \$2.5 million. Government work with USAID also includes a program focused on pension and labor market reform aimed to help individuals, households and communities manage social risks and needs.(26) The impact of these efforts on child labor has not been assessed.

The Children Support Center Foundation offers child protection services and maintains a hotline for children in crisis.(27) The non-profits Hope and Help and United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) run helplines for victims of trafficking.(10, 19) The Government planned in 2005 that by 2015 it would create 25 day care centers to offer children alternative activities to work. To date, only two centers exist, one in the Shirak region and one in Yerevan.(28)

Research found no evidence of any programs specifically for assisting children engaged in agriculture or urban informal work in the country.(4)

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Armenia:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Coordination and Enforcement	Establish a mechanism to coordinate child labor efforts across the government.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Fully enforce the compulsory education requirement.	2011
	Increase the number of labor inspectors and train them on child labor issues.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Provide police and other law enforcement officials who investigate and prosecute trafficking and sexual exploitation of children with child labor specific training.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Implement an adequate victim-witness protection mechanism for criminal proceedings.	2011
Policies	Develop and implement programs to prevent and eliminate the worst forms of child labor as intended under the National Plan of Action for the Protection of the Rights of the Child 2004-2015.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Address the gender, geographic and economic barriers that prohibit some children from accessing education.	2010, 2011
	Collect data on children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in Armenia.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Develop policies to combat the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and the urban informal sector and prevent children from working in hard manual labor.	2010, 2011
	Assess the impact of the Armenia Country Program's enhanced child care system, continuum of child protection services, and comprehensive policy framework for protecting vulnerable children on the worst forms of child labor in the country.	2011
Social Programs	Create programs to specifically address the needs of children in the worst forms of child labor, such as children engaged in the agricultural and urban informal sectors.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Assess the impact of the UNDAF focus on developing vocational training and technical assistance programs on the worst forms of child labor in the country.	2011
Social Programs	Assess the impact of the USAID's efforts build capacity in the child protection system, and to improve social safety nets on the worst forms of child labor in the country.	2011
	Develop additional day care centers to provide alternative activities for working children.	2011

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