

In 2015, Armenia made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Despite new initiatives to address child labor, Armenia is receiving this assessment because it continued to implement a law that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. The Government failed to remedy the uncertainty regarding its authority to monitor, inspect, and enforce child labor laws caused by its 2014 repeal of Article 34 of the Labor Code, which previously established the Government's authority to conduct routine labor inspections. Since that time, the Government has lacked a functioning labor inspection mechanism to monitor, inspect, and enforce child labor laws. Otherwise, the Government made efforts by developing and conducting a National Child Labor Survey and introducing regulations that placed restrictions on acceptable working hours for children employed in the entertainment industry. Children in Armenia are engaged in child labor in the services sector. The Government also lacks a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address all forms of child labor, including its worst forms. In addition, no programs exist to aid children engaged in work activities on the street or in agriculture.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, evidence suggests that children are engaged in child labor in the services sector in Armenia.(1-6) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Armenia.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	8.1 (30,494)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	89.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	9.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		100.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2008, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(7)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2010.(8)

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, including planting and harvesting potatoes* (1, 3-6, 9, 10)
	Raising livestock,* including cattle breeding,* cattle herding,* and shepherding* (4-6, 11)
Industry	Construction,* activities unknown (1, 6, 10, 12)
Services	Washing cars* (3, 4)
	Street work, including gathering scrap metal,* selling flowers,* and begging (1, 2, 4-6, 12, 13)
	Working in shops* (6)
	Dancing in clubs* (6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (4, 10, 14-16)
	Forced begging sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (4, 10, 15)

* 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.

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Although Article 38 of the Constitution of Armenia and Article 6 of the Law of Republic of Armenia on Education guarantee free universal education, children from low-income families and from families belonging to ethnic minorities continue to have reduced access to education.(17, 18) In addition, children with disabilities also face difficulty accessing mainstream education due to the inaccessibility of the physical infrastructure of schools, a lack of individual education planning and methodologies, a lack of community-based support services for the child and the family, and a general social stigma against individuals with disabilities.(17-20) As a result of these barriers, a source reports that over 70 percent of children with disabilities in the care of the state and almost 20 percent of children with disabilities in the care of their families do not attend school.(20, 21)

In addition, the rate of institutionalization of children remained high. Research found that children enrolled in government boarding schools, orphanages, and special education institutions were likely to experience physical and psychological violence, and were at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking.(10, 18, 21)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Armenia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 15 and 17 of the Labor Code; Article 57 of the Constitution (22, 23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 257 of the Labor Code (22)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		List of Work Categories Considered Excessive or Harmful for Persons Under the Age of 18, Women Who are Pregnant, and Women Caring for Infants Under the Age of One Year; Articles 140, 148, 153, 155, 249, and 257 of the Labor Code (22, 24)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 57 of the Constitution; Article 3 of the Labor Code; Articles 132 and 132.2 of the Criminal Code (22, 23, 25-27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 132 and 132.2 of the Criminal Code (25, 28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 132.2, 166, and 261-263 of the Criminal Code (25, 26, 28)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 165 and 166.1 of the Criminal Code (25, 26, 28)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 5 of the Law on Mandatory Military Service (28, 29)
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 18 of the Law on Education (28, 30)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 38 of the Constitution; Article 6 of the Law on Education (23, 30)

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In December 2015, a national referendum resulted in significant changes to the Constitution. The Constitution continues to prohibit forced labor and ensure free public education, but these provisions are now housed in new articles, as referenced above.(23, 27)

It has been reported that in April 2015, the Government introduced an amendment to the Law on Education that will increase the compulsory education age to 19 years, beginning in 2017.(27)

It has also been reported that in June 2015, the National Assembly adopted changes to the Labor Code that introduced regulations for children’s work in the entertainment industry and included restrictions on acceptable working hours for children of all ages.(27) According to the updated legislation, children ages 14 to 15 may work no more than 24 hours per week, while children ages 16 to 17 may work no more than 36 hours per week.(27)

The minimum age for work is 16. If children ages 14 and 15 obtain the written consent of a parent or a guardian, they may work restricted hours as specified by the labor code; however, Armenia does not specify the type or conditions of light work in which they may engage.(22, 31)

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
State Health Inspectorate (SHI)	Enforce labor laws and impose sanctions for violations.(32) In particular, enforce occupational safety and health provisions through the Oversight Department for Work Safety and other labor laws through the Oversight Department Over the Implementation of Labor Code Norms.(27)
Main Department on Especially Serious Crimes within the Investigative Committee	Investigate cases of child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children referred to the Investigative Committee by the Police.(19, 33)
Department on Defending the Rights of Minors and Combating Domestic Violence within the Police	Identify and conduct preliminary investigation of crimes in which children are victims or perpetrators.(14, 19) Enforce laws against the worst forms of child labor under the General Department of Criminal Intelligence.(19, 28, 33) Refer identified crimes to the Investigative Committee for further investigation.(19)
Anti-Trafficking Unit within the Police	Identify and conduct preliminary investigation of crimes related to child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children through a staff of seven field officers. Operate within the Department of Combating High-Tech related (Cyber) Crimes, Human Trafficking, Illegal Migration, and Terrorism of the General Department on Combating Organized Crime.(34) Refer identified crimes to the Investigative Committee for further investigation.(19)
Police Hotline	Receive complaints related to human trafficking and migration issues.(10)

Due to successive legislative changes reorganizing labor inspection in Armenia and a lack of clarity surrounding the legal mandate for conducting inspections, in 2015 the State Health Inspectorate (SHI) was unable to systematically monitor or enforce child labor laws in Armenia.(35)

Since 2013, a number of legislative changes to the labor inspection mechanism have taken place as part of a broader inspection reform agenda in Armenia. In July 2013, the Government adopted Decree #857-N that created the new State Health Inspectorate (SHI) under the Ministry of Health to take over the combined inspection functions of the former State Labor Inspectorate under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and the former State Hygiene and Anti-Epidemic Inspectorate under the Ministry of Health.(34) This decree outlined the SHI’s mandate, which includes supervision of labor legislation and safeguards for working children established by the Labor Code.(27, 36)

However, in December 2014, the National Assembly adopted legislation repealing Article 34 of the Labor Code, which had previously established Government authority to conduct routine labor inspections.(27, 35, 37) SHI officials reported that this legislative change, which came into force in January 2015, restricts the SHI to conducting inspections based on complaints related to occupational safety and health violations.(35) Despite this statement from SHI officials, another source reported that the Law on Inspection Bodies, also passed in December 2014, may have obviated the need for Article 34 of the Labor Code, as

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Article 6 of the Law on Inspection Bodies outlines the powers of all inspection bodies in Armenia, including the ability to conduct inspections.(27, 38) As a result of these conflicting understandings of the current legislation, the SHI’s mandate to monitor, inspect, and enforce child labor laws remains unclear, and the SHI remained unable to monitor, inspect, and enforce child labor laws in 2015.

SHI officials report that the SHI will undergo further reorganization as part of the Government’s continuing campaign to streamline inspections in Armenia, which should increase clarity on the SHI’s mandate to conduct inspections. In anticipation of these further changes and clarification, the SHI halted all inspections of any kind in July 2015, with the exception of sanitary oversight over kindergartens and schools.(27)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2015, labor law enforcement agencies in Armenia remained unable to monitor, inspect, and enforce laws against 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	60 (35)	60 (39)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (40)	Yes (39)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	No (39)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (40)	No (39)
Number of Labor Inspections	48 (40)	72 (27)
■ Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	Unknown
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	2 (40)	1 (27)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	2 (40)	0 (39)
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (40)	Yes (39)
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (40)	Yes (39)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (35)	No (39)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (35)	No (39)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (35)	Yes (27)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Yes (27)

As part of the 2013 restructuring, the number of labor inspectors was reduced from 146 to 60, which the SHI reported was insufficient to fully enforce labor laws prior to the cessation of inspections. The 20 inspectors based at the SHI headquarters are civil servants, while the remaining 40 are contractors.(35) The SHI reports that while civil servants must receive training at least once every three years, there is no requirement that contractors receive regular training. As a result, the SHI anticipates that the high proportion of contracted inspectors will negatively impact the overall training level and competency of the body of inspectors over time.(35) In addition, the SHI lacks sufficient funding, work space, computers, and transportation to effectively enforce labor laws. SHI officials reported that inspectors are often required to walk to inspection sites in order to perform inspections due to lack of transportation.(35, 39) Inspectors do have the authority to enter the premises of a business during the course of inspections.(39)

While inspectors do not have the right to issue penalties for violations discovered during the course of investigations, the head of the SHI, his deputies, and regional unit managers do have the power to review cases of violations and issue administrative penalties.(39) An SHI official indicated that penalties for violations of labor laws were insufficient to deter violations.(27)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2015, criminal law enforcement agencies in Armenia took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (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	Yes (39)
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	N/A
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (16, 40)	Yes (39)
Number of Investigations	5 (40)	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	5 (40)	3 (39)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	2 (40)	2 (39)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (40)	Yes (39)

The Investigative Committee’s police officers respond to allegations of a crime and conduct a pre-investigation during a period of 10 days to determine whether a crime has been committed. After this period, the case is either transferred to the Investigative Committee for full investigation or dropped due to lack of evidence of a crime.(19)

The Main Department on Especially Serious Crimes within the Investigative Committee has 40 investigators, 7 of whom are specialized in investigating human trafficking cases, and the Government reports that overall almost 300 police officers and investigators are engaged in investigations of crimes involving children.(33, 39, 40) The Investigative Committee requires that its personnel receive training at least once every two years. As a result, over 200 investigators received refresher training in 2015, which included 2 hours of instruction on trafficking in persons, including child trafficking. During the reporting period, 174 police officers focusing on juvenile cases also received training on child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children.(39)

Child victims discovered during the course of criminal investigations are referred to the Fund for Armenian Relief Children’s Center, where they are provided with specialized social services.(39) A source reported that because not all the children who are referred to social service providers by the Police are officially registered as victims, official statistics for begging, forced begging, and commercial sexual exploitation may underreport the scope of the problem.(4)

Research found that although the Police work with social service providers when conducting the pre-investigation, the Investigative Committee does not work with social service providers to ensure the well-being of the children during the investigation period.(4) In addition, a source reported that law enforcement officials do not receive sufficient specialized training on interviewing child victims of crime.(4) The Government’s implementation of the Criminal Procedural Code’s provisions on victim and witness protection continued to be inadequate due to lack of an appropriate victim witness protection mechanism and of sufficient funding for these efforts.(10, 41)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Although the Government has established coordinating mechanisms to combat human trafficking and ensure the protection of child rights, research found no evidence of mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including all its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Commission on the Protection of Child Rights	Coordinate activities of state bodies responsible for child protection, assist in developing state policy and programs aimed at the protection of children’s rights, and assist in developing solutions to new child welfare problems as they arise. Facilitate cooperation between state and local government and NGOs.(28) Maintain a working group to prevent child begging, which includes representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education.(28)
Ministerial Council to Combat Human Trafficking	Implement, coordinate, and monitor government efforts on human trafficking.(15, 28) Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and composed of various officials from 17 government entities.(15)
Inter-Agency Working Group against Trafficking in Persons	Advise, organize, and implement decisions made by the Ministerial Council to Combat Human Trafficking.(15) Chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and composed of officials from all government entities. Includes nongovernmental stakeholders such as NGOs, international organizations, and social partners in regularly scheduled meetings.(15, 28)

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V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Concept on Combatting Violence Against Children	Defines government priorities for combatting violence against children and outlines a list of related activities. Addresses labor exploitation of children, especially in rural communities, and commercial sexual exploitation of children, especially child trafficking.(33)
Strategic Program for the Protection of Children's Rights (2013–2016)*	Outlines the Government's goals and activities in the sphere of child rights protection; formerly included a child labor component focusing on data collection on working children, awareness raising of the rights of working children, and implementation of oversight mechanisms for children's work.(42) The National Child Labor Survey and recommendations for the prevention of child labor exploitation originally envisaged in the 2013–2016 Strategic Program remains in the list of activities for 2016. However, during a 2014 revision, the Government removed the child labor component from the document.(19, 33)
National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons for the Years 2013–2015	Aims to improve victim identification, including for child laborers; conduct surveys among working children; improve prevention efforts; and work with the media on the format and approach of reporting on human trafficking cases.(43) Focuses on five areas: legislation on action against trafficking in persons and enforcement of laws; prevention of trafficking in persons; protection of and support to victims of trafficking in persons; cooperation; and surveys, monitoring, and evaluation.(43)
UNDAF Plan for Armenia (2016–2020)*†	Focuses on poverty reduction through expanding economic and social opportunities for vulnerable groups, including improving access to basic education and social protection services for vulnerable children.(20)

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

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Armenia 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
Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development (MAP)	USDOL-funded research project implemented by the ILO in 10 countries, including Armenia, to increase the knowledge base around child labor by collecting new data, analyzing existing data, and building capacity to conduct research in this area.(44) In 2015, the ILO signed an agreement with the National Statistics Services to conduct a national child labor survey.(45) The project trained 48 enumerators on survey techniques, piloted the survey in two districts, and then implemented the full survey from October – December 2015. The project anticipates publicizing the full results of the survey in June 2016.(45)
Family Benefits Program†	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA)-funded poverty-mitigation program for families with children recorded in the Family Poverty Assessment System. Families receive a monthly payment based on their financial situation, the number of children in the family, and the geographical location of their home.(39)
Social Response to Labor Migration in Armenia Project (2013–2016)	EU-funded, 3-year project implemented by UNICEF, the Ministry of Territorial Administration, and MoLSA designed to mitigate the social vulnerability of labor migrants' families, including children.(46)
Armenia Social Protection Administration II Project (SPAP) (2014–2018)†	\$25.5 million World Bank project, including a \$4.3 million Government contribution, to improve social services delivery through the functional integration of agencies responsible for social services. Continues the first SPAP's efforts to co-locate service providers for social protection benefits by building 37 new Integrated Social Protection Centers, 19 of which were completed by the close of the reporting period.(39, 47) Will target unemployed youth through the Youth Without Education and Skills program.(47)
UNICEF Country Program for 2010–2015	Outlines a plan for the development of an enhanced child care system, a continuum of child protection services to identify and respond to the exploitation and abuse of children, and a comprehensive policy framework for protecting vulnerable children in cooperation with UNICEF.(48)
Day Care Centerst	Government-supported day care centers that provide alternatives to working children and daytime centers that provide services for children with special needs.(34) In 2015, the Government contributed funding to four daytime centers to support up to 250 children, providing funding for wages of 84 day care center employees.(34, 39, 49-51)

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

Program	Description
Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking†	Government shelter co-funded and run by the United Methodist Committee on Relief—Armenia that provides victims of human trafficking with medical, psychological, social, and legal services; access to education for children; and vocational training for adult victims.(16)
School Feeding Program†	Program co-funded by the World Food Program. In 2015, the government provided over \$1 million to provide in-school meals for 22,209 children in 3 regions of Armenia, while World Food Program funding provided meals to 67,000 children in schools throughout the rest of the country.(39)

† Program is funded by the Government of Armenia.

Although the Government of Armenia has implemented programs to address child labor, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs to assist children engaged in child labor in street work or in agriculture.

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 Armenia (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 Armenian law specifies the types of light work and the working conditions acceptable for children age 14-15.	2014 – 2015
Enforcement	Ensure that the legal framework on inspections clearly empowers the SHI to monitor, inspect, and enforce child labor laws through quality inspections, including targeted, complaint-based, and unannounced inspections; that inspectors have the ability to assess penalties; and that data on the number and type of inspections, violations, and penalties are made publicly available.	2014 – 2015
	Address deficiencies in the SHI's labor inspection resources, including by increasing the number of labor inspectors and empowering inspectors to perform unannounced inspections; increasing the funding and resources available to the SHI; and ensuring that all inspectors receive an adequate amount of training.	2014 – 2015
	Make information on the SHI's funding publicly available.	2015
	Ensure that penalties for child labor violations are sufficient to serve as a deterrent.	2014 – 2015
	Make information on the number of investigations and convictions related to criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor publicly available.	2015
	Protect children by providing law enforcement officials with specialized training on interviewing child victims of crime, and by ensuring that law enforcement officials coordinate with social service providers to protect the best interests of the child during an investigation.	2014 – 2015
	Implement and adequately fund a victim-witness protection mechanism for criminal proceedings.	2011 – 2015
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor, including its worst forms.	2009 – 2015
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into national policies, including the Strategic Program for the Protection of Children's Rights and the UNDAF Plan for Armenia (2016–2020).	2011 – 2015
Social Programs	Ensure that all children, including children from low-income families and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have equal access to education.	2010 – 2015
	Increase efforts to prevent institutionalization of children and to ensure the safety and well-being of children currently residing in government institutions.	2015
	Ensure that mainstream education is accessible to children with special education needs and children with disabilities by improving the accessibility of the physical infrastructure, bringing the child disability assessment criteria up to international standards, improving needs assessments, expanding community-based support services, and ensuring that social stigmas against individuals with disabilities do not prevent children from accessing schools.	2014 – 2015
	Implement programs to address child labor in street work and in agriculture.	2009 – 2015

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