Colombia

The Government of Colombia continued to strengthen its legal and policy framework to combat the worst forms of child labor by enacting additional laws and policies against commercial sexual exploitation of children. However, it has neither effectively enforced its child labor laws, nor has it fully implemented policies to combat exploitive child labor. The worst forms of child labor are prevalent in agriculture and mining. There are still reports of forced child labor in coca cultivation and forcible recruitment of children by illegal armed groups.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	3.2%
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	92.6%
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	2.9%



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children are exploited in the worst forms of child labor in Colombia, many in agriculture and mining. 1098 In the agricultural sector, children may be exposed to the elements and high levels of dust, perform physically arduous tasks, use dangerous tools, and face high risk of occupational injury. They work in the production of coffee, sugarcane, bananas, plantains, rice, cotton, fruit, and vegetables, as well as raising livestock. 1100 Children are also involved in artisanal mining, where they are exposed to toxic gases, long hours, dangerous chemicals such as nitric acid, and high temperatures. They work in emerald, gold, clay, and coal mining, breaking rocks, digging clay and dirt, removing water from mines, and lifting heavy loads. 1101 Indigenous Wayúu children work alongside their families in the production of salt, talc, and gypsum. 1102

Children work on the streets in urban areas, where they may be exposed to long hours, the elements, and risk of physical injuries. They lift heavy loads in markets and are engaged in street vending. Children are also involved in recycling, where they are exposed

to toxic substances such as lead and sulfuric acid as well as dangerous waste. 1104

The Colombian National Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) estimates that 4,457 children live on the streets of 16 Colombian cities and are engaged in begging, stealing, street vending, recycling, and commercial sexual exploitation. ¹¹⁰⁵

Children are engaged in domestic service in Colombia. Child domestic workers work up to 12 hours a day and perform household chores such as ironing, cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children. Children working in domestic service are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse by their employers. They often do not receive salaries and are not allowed to take their legal time off. Indigenous families in rural areas send their children to urban households to work as domestic workers.

A 2006 study found that 2,117 children were involved in commercial sexual exploitation in 11 cities in Colombia. Children are also involved in child pornography and sex tourism. In the Department of Sucre, indigenous *Zenous* children are often the victims

of sex tourism; while in Bogota, underage boys are solicited for sexual purposes. There are reports of criminal bands that use the Internet and cell phones to recruit children. Children are also trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation domestically and internationally.

Children are used by adults for illegal activities, such as coca cultivation and the processing and transport of illicit drugs. There are reports of children trafficked from Ecuador for the purpose of labor exploitation in domestic service and coca cultivation. Indigenous Wayúu children have been involved in the illegal sale of gasoline from Venezuela, draining gasoline from tankers on the border between Colombia and Venezuela. Children are victims of forced labor in coca cultivation, mining and quarries, and domestic work, and are forcibly recruited as child soldiers. Children from Honduras and Nicaragua have been found working under forced labor conditions in fishing.

Although minors below the age of 18 years are not allowed to be recruited into the National Armed Forces, reports state that children have been used as informants by members of the National Armed Forces in direct contravention of military policy and have participated in civic-military activities. Additionally, children continue to be recruited by illegal armed groups. As of 2008, an estimated 11,000 to 14,000 children, including indigenous children, were acting as combatants in various non-state groups. Some of them were forced to participate in, and are victims of, human rights violations such as torture and murder. Female combatants are subject to sexual exploitation by other group members. 1119

The Government of Colombia considers all the activities described in this section as worst forms of child labor.¹¹²⁰

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Code for Children and Adolescents sets the minimum age for non-hazardous work at 15 and hazardous work at 18. 1121 Resolution No. 01677 of 2008 identifies the worst forms of child labor that are prohibited for all minors under age 18, including

domestic work. Minors are not permitted to perform most forms of work related to agriculture, fisheries, lumber, mining, industrial manufacturing, utilities, construction, heavy equipment, or transportation. The Code for Children and Adolescents establishes fines for violations of its provisions, while the *Labor Code* sets fines for labor law violations. 1123

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

The Penal Code prohibits slavery, servitude, and human trafficking, and establishes strict sanctions for violations. 1124 It penalizes commercial sexual exploitation of children —including prostitution, pornography, and sex tourism—with incarceration and fines. 1125 Law 679 of 2001 penalizes tourism agencies and hotel owners with fines and penalties for involvement in child sex tourism. 1126 The Penal *Code* punishes forced prostitution and sexual slavery related to armed conflict with imprisonment and fines; it also penalizes the recruitment of minors by illegal armed groups and the armed forces and punishes the commission of terrorist acts involving a minor. 1127 Law 782 of 2002 regards minors that participate in the country's hostilities as victims. Victims are those who suffer harm or significant deterioration in their personal well-being. 1128 Nonetheless, the Office of the Attorney General may choose to prosecute a minor

who has violated international humanitarian law or committed genocide. Law 975 of 2005 establishes that armed groups must place all minor recruits under the care of Colombian National Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) in order to participate in the government's demobilization process. In addition, the Penal Code and Law 975 of 2005 penalize crimes involving the use of a minor by an adult in terrorism as well as in cultivating, manufacturing, and trafficking illegal drugs. 130

During the reporting period, the Government of Colombia strengthened legislation to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children. Law 1329 of 2009 amends Title IV of the Penal Code, calling for incarceration for up to 25 years for the sexual exploitation of children, as well as penalizing the demand for and offer of children's sexual services. 1131 Law 1336 of 2009 requires that tourism agencies, airlines, and hotels adopt a code of conduct to prevent commercial sexual exploitation of children; hotels may be seized if they are used for such a purpose. 1132 Given that relevant legislation has undergone frequent changes; it is not clear whether those changes are disseminated among enforcement officials, employers, civil society organizations, and communities in general.

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

In 1995, the Government of Colombia established the Interagency Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (CIETI) to coordinate its efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. It is chaired by the Ministry of Social Protection (MSP), and includes 13 government agencies and representatives from trade unions, business associations, and civil society organizations. 1133 In 2001, the Government created a national committee to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children, which under Law 1336 of 2009, became the new National Inter-agency Committee for the Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation. It is led by MSP and includes more than 11 government agencies and representatives from the private sector, trade unions, and civil society organizations. 1134 In 2005, the Government of Colombia created the Interagency Committee to Combat Trafficking of Persons previously known as the Inter-agency Committee to Combat Trafficking of Children and Women—to lead

its efforts to combat human trafficking. Fourteen government agencies are part of the Committee, including the Ministry of Interior and Justice, the ICBF, the Ministry of Social Protection, and the Attorney General's Office. The Government also established the Inter-agency Committee for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Children by Illegal Armed Groups, which is coordinated by the Vice President. Despite these inter-institutional efforts, roles have not been clearly defined among government agencies at the national and local levels.

The Ministry of Social Protection (MSP), the National Police, the Office of the Solicitor, the General Comptroller Office, and the National and Municipal Ombudsman Offices enforce child-labor related laws. The National Police and the Offices of the Solicitor and Ombudsman have established children and youth units.¹¹³⁷

The MSP has 424 inspectors who conduct labor inspections, including 155 new labor inspectors who have been hired through Decree 1294 of 2009. 1138 In 2009, 38,457 labor inspections were conducted and 975 complaints of exploitive child labor were received by the Colombian National Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) hotline, which receives complaints of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation. 1139 However, research did not reveal information about the number of labor inspections related to cases of child labor, the number of children found working illegally, the results of those inspections, whether the complaints received by the ICBF hotline were referred to enforcement agencies, or actions taken by government agencies to rescue children from exploitive labor.

During the reporting period, the MSP established a new labor inspections system that seeks to prevent work-related violations by engaging the private sector and trade unions.¹¹⁴⁰

Reports on labor inspections have pointed out that labor inspectors do not have the adequate equipment or training to perform their work, and labor inspections focus mainly on labor dispute settlements and are conducted in urban areas.¹¹⁴¹

The Attorney General's Office and the National Police (NP) investigate cases of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. In 2009, the ICBF hotline received 551 complaints of commercial sexual

exploitation of children.¹¹⁴² However, there is no public information available about the number of children rescued, investigations, prosecutions, or convictions as a result of those complaints.

The national anti-trafficking call center received 7,801 calls; 124 of them were directly related to human trafficking, and all were referred to the Anti-Human Trafficking Operations Center (COAT), which leads efforts to combat trafficking by tracking cases, coordinating investigations, and facilitating access to social services among victims of trafficking. As a result, nine children were rescued from trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. During the reporting period, the Attorney General's office opened 215 new investigations into trafficking in persons; 14 cases resulted in convictions. The Government of Colombia provides training in human trafficking for enforcement officials.

In addition, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism and the Superintendency of Industry and Commerce ensure that tourism agencies and hotels establish codes of conduct to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children.¹¹⁴⁵

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Strategy to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2008-2015) is the primary framework to address the worst forms of child labor in Colombia.1146 The National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents Less than 18 Years of Age (2006-2011) lays out the strategy to combat commercial exploitation of children. The National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2007-2012) guides government efforts to combat human trafficking, including the trafficking of children. The Government included child labor into the National Development Plan (2006-2010) and the Plan for Childhood (2004-2015).

Despite these efforts, gaps remain. The Government has established zero tolerance for child labor in its National Strategy to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor without targeting specific forms of child labor, sectors, geographical areas, or a timeframe. As a result, government efforts may not be focused on the areas of greatest need and the most vulnerable populations. 1150 According to the Colombian Solicitor's Office, most of the country's provinces have failed to incorporate child labor into their development plans, have failed to spend available funding, or do not have funding for the implementation of the National Strategy. Only four of the provinces and nine cities have taken actions to implement the National Strategy to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor. 1151 The national social protection framework developed through Conpes Social No.102—the Social Protection Network against Extreme Poverty—did not include child labor directly, even though it targets vulnerable populations. 1152 The Government has yet to establish a policy framework to prevent the recruitment of children into illegal armed groups and address children working in coca cultivation.

The Government has conducted national surveys on child labor since 2001. 1153

However, information gaps remain. The national surveys do not provide insights into the activities performed by working children or health and occupational risks associated with these activities. In addition, there is little information about the commercial sexual exploitation of children, street children, trafficking in children, children in coca cultivation, or children recruited by illegal armed groups, or those engaged in drug trafficking.

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

Since 1996, the Government of Colombia has developed initiatives to combat child labor. It is currently carrying out several programs as part of the implementation of the National Strategy to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor, the Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents Less than 18 Years of Age, and the National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons. During the reporting period, Colombian National Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) provided social services to 2,571 children who were involved in mining and 1,806

child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. It raised awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children in 18 municipalities. ICBF also signed agreements with the province of Cordoba and the cities of Armenia, Cartagena, Cucuta, and Dosquebradas to carry out joint initiatives to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children. As of 2009, ICBF, with support from IOM, has assisted 4,394 children who were recruited by illegal armed groups, and claims to have prevented 108,735 children from joining them. 1156

The Ministries of Social Protection, Education, Interior and Justice, and Commerce and Tourism as well as the Ombudsman Office, Vice President's Office, and the National Police carried out multiple activities to eradicate and prevent exploitative child labor. For example, the Ministry of Education carried out an initiative to keep working children in school; the Ombudsman's Office developed a set of indicators to prevent the recruitment of children by illegal armed groups; the National Police in the Department of Meta conducted a campaign to prevent children from vending at stop lights; and the Ministry of Interior and Justice carried out public campaigns to prevent human trafficking.¹¹⁵⁷

To reduce extreme poverty, the Government of Colombia implements several programs, including Families in Action and the Together Network, which are led by the President's Office. These programs have benefited more than 3.5 million families through conditional cash transfers and social services such as education, health, job training, and microfinance. Although these programs have improved vulnerable families' livelihoods, there is no information available about their impact on child labor.

The Government of Colombia has had the support of international donors to combat child labor. Since 2001, the Government has participated in child labor initiatives funded by USDOL aimed at children engaged in mining, domestic services, and commercial sexual exploitation. Since 2007, USDOL has funded a \$5.1 million Time-Bound project (TBP) to support the implementation of the National Strategy to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The TBP seeks to withdraw 3,663 and prevent 6,537 children from exploitative child labor in mining, street vending, commercial sexual exploitation, transportation, construction, and agriculture. 1160

The Government of Colombia also receives funding from the Governments of Canada, United States, Spain, and the European Union as well as technical support from several international and nongovernmental organizations to combat child labor, such as hazardous child labor, commercial sexual exploitation of children, recruitment of children by illegal armed groups, and trafficking in persons. 1161 During the reporting period, UNODC and IOM trained local enforcement officials in human trafficking in five provinces and three cities, respectively. Save the Children implemented an initiative to prevent and eradicate child labor in 23 municipalities, and which provided social services to more than 2,000 children. 1162 UNICEF, along with the Ministry of Education, the province of Nariño, and PROINCO Foundation, is carrying out a pilot project to combat child labor in the province of Nariño that will benefit 790 children. ILO-IPEC supported the Colombian Solicitor's Office in monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor. 1163 In addition, Telefonica Foundation partnered with two provinces and 10 municipalities to combat child labor. This public-private partnership helped 5,015 children. 1164

The Government of Colombia continues to partner with countries in the region to address child-labor related issues. During the reporting period, the Government participated in the MERCOSUR initiative Niño Sur (Southern Child) and the Joint Group for the Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism in South America. Niño Sur raises awareness of commercial sexual exploitation, improves country legal frameworks, and exchanges best practices to protect and assist victims of commercial sexual exploitation. 1165 The Joint Group conducts prevention and awareness-raising campaigns to combat the commercial exploitation of children in Latin America. Created in 2005, it includes the Ministries of Tourism of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, and Uruguay. 1166 During the reporting period, the Government of Colombia shared its experience in combating human trafficking, giving presentations at regional forums and hosting delegations from other countries to showcase the Anti-Human Trafficking Operations Center (COAT), which is regarded as a model program in Latin America. 1167

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

IN THE AREA OF LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Develop and utilize communication tools about legislative changes, possibly by:
- Providing up-to-date information about legislation to provincial and municipal governments, and enforcement officials.
- Establishing a one-stop online tool with updated information about child labor laws for employers, workers, families, and online users.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Strengthen coordination mechanisms among inter-agency committees by better defining the roles of member agencies at the national and local level.
- Make publicly available information on worst forms of child labor enforcement efforts, including against commercial sex exploitation, such as the number of inspections, number of children rescued from child labor, and actions taken in response to complaints.
- Implement the new labor inspection system.
- Provide training and equipment to labor inspectors to perform their work.
- Ensure that labor inspection coverage includes all sectors and geographic areas.

IN THE AREA OF POLICY:

- Establish specific targets in the National Strategy to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor taking into account forms of child labor, sectors, geographical areas, and timeframes.
- Include child labor in social protection policies such as CONPES Social 102
- Develop and implement national policy to prevent the use of children in coca cultivation and the recruitment of children into illegal armed groups.
- Establish and implement a system to improve implementation of national policies to combat child labor by municipality and department, including by:
- Linking it to other monitoring systems such as that of the Together Network.
- Providing additional resources to municipalities and departments to carry out action plans and incentives to use unspent funding.
- Carry out research and studies on activities performed by working children, including associated health and occupational risks, as well as children's recruitment into illegal armed groups and their involvement in commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, street work, coca cultivation, and drug trafficking.

IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

 Integrate national strategies to combat child labor into social protection programs such as the Together Network and Families in Action. 1098 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 provided are from 2007. 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 on children's work are reported in this chart, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section.

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