

Sierra Leone

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2013, Sierra Leone made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government launched the Agenda for Prosperity, which includes strategies to address child labor; released data from the National Child Labor Survey (2010–2011); and participated in social programs to address child labor and child trafficking. However, children in Sierra Leone continue to engage in child labor in agriculture and in the worst forms of child labor in mining. Sierra Leone lacks a law prohibiting the use of children in illicit activities and there is limited funding for enforcement efforts or social programs.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Sierra Leone are engaged in child labor in agriculture and in the worst forms of child labor in mining. According to the preliminary findings of a National Child Labor Survey (2010-2011) conducted by Statistics Sierra Leone with support from the ILO, 45.9 percent of all children ages 5 to 17 years were engaged in child labor.⁽¹⁾ Some 22.0 percent of children ages 5 to 17 years were identified as being engaged in hazardous work.^(1, 2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Sierra Leone.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	34.7 (579,851)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	73.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	31.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		72.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.⁽³⁾

Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2010.⁽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	Production of coffee, cocoa, and palm oil (5, 6)
	Fishing,* deep-sea fishing,* mending nets, and working on boats in the open sea (2, 7-9)
	Farming, activities unknown (9)
	Forestry, activities unknown (1)
Industry	Mining† for alluvial diamonds, sand,* gold,* including loading gravel in sacks or basins, carrying sacks on their heads, washing, and sieving (2, 9-11)
	Quarrying† and crushing stone, including granite, breaking rock, shoveling, and transporting gravel* (2, 10, 12)
	Construction, activities unknown (1, 9)
	Working as apprentices in auto-repair shops and on transportation vehicles (poda-poda) (9)
Services	Manufacturing, activities unknown (1)
	Scavenging scrap metals and recyclable materials from dumpsites (2, 9, 10, 13)
	Domestic service (2, 9)
	Street, including selling goods (2, 10, 11, 14, 15)
	Wholesale and retail trading, petty trading, vending, and hawking (1, 2, 9, 10, 16)
	Portering,† including carrying heavy loads (9, 10)
Street begging (6)	
	Transportation and storage, activities unknown (1, 9)

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Begging as a result of human trafficking (2, 9, 17)
	Forced stealing (9, 10)
	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human (9-11, 17)
	Working in granite and alluvial diamond mines, and other unknown work activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9-11, 17)

* 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.







The majority of children are trafficked from rural provinces or refugee communities to urban and mining areas.(10, 17) Reports suggest that children from Nigeria, The Gambia, Côte d’Ivoire, and Guinea may be trafficked to Sierra Leone for begging, domestic service and for commercial sexual exploitation.(10, 17) Children have been trafficked internally, especially from rural to urban areas and to diamond-mining areas for sexual exploitation and other labor.(9, 17)

In 2013, the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) upheld the conviction of former Liberian President Charles Taylor for a range of crimes under international law, including recruiting children under the age of 15 to participate in armed conflict.(18-20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Sierra Leone has ratified most 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 relevant laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 125 of the Child Rights Act (2007); Article 52 of the Employers and Employed Act Chapter 212 (1960); Regulation of Wages and Industrial Relations Act of 1971 (21, 22)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 128 of the Child Rights Act (21)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 128 of the Child Rights Act (21); Article 48 and 55 of the Employers and Employed Act Chapter 212 (1960); Acts 170 and 164 of the Mines and Minerals Act (2009) (21-23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Act 19 of the Constitution (24)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 2 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Article 60 of the Child Rights Act (21, 25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 19-34 of the Sexual Offenses Act; Article 2 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (25, 26)

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

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 28 of the Child Rights Act (21)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 9 of the Constitution; Article 125 of the Child Rights Act (21, 24)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3 of the Basic Education Act (2004); Article 2 of the Constitution; Article 11 of the Child Rights Act (21, 24, 27)

* No conscription or no standing military.

While the Government of Sierra Leone has not ratified the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, the Cabinet approved its accession and recommended that Parliament ratify it in February 2013.(28)

Research did not uncover laws prohibiting the use of children in illicit activities.

Labor laws prescribe fines that may neither reflect the present value of Sierra Leone’s currency nor be commensurate with the severity of the crimes. For example, penalties for violations of the Employers and Employed Act are liable to a fine of 50 pounds or to imprisonment of six months.(9, 22)

Act 57 of the Employers and Employed Act permits the father or the guardian of a child between the ages of 12 and 14 to serve as an apprentice, including in a trade or skill or in domestic service.(2, 22) This provision is not in line with ILO C. 138, which requires apprentices to be at least 14 years of age.(16)

According to the Basic Education Act, the Government has established the right to free primary education. (10, 27) However, in practice, schools charge fees to pay for uniforms, books, and salaries for unregistered teachers.(10, 21, 24, 29) Some children work part-time in order to earn money for these school fees.(10, 27, 29, 30) Other barriers to education include poor sanitation, unsafe school conditions, and travel costs to and from school.(9, 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
Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs (MSWGCA)—Child Protection Unit	Enforce child labor law and monitor compliance with child labor regulations.(2, 9)
Ministry of Labor and Employment—Child Labor Unit (CLU)	Supervise implementation of ILO C. 138 and 182; and formulate, implement, and monitor compliance with child labor regulations.(2, 16)
Ministry of Labor and Employment—Labor Officers	Enforce child labor provisions in the Child Rights Act. Handle all labor issues in the district and initial investigations.(13)
District Councils	Enforce child labor laws in the informal sector.(9, 13)
Village Child Welfare Committees	Promote awareness on child rights. Report child welfare concerns to village and government officials who are responsible for children’s issues. Provide recommendations and instructions on the maintenance and support of specific village children. Address complaints and concerns of adults or children in the village.(13, 21)
Ministry of Mineral Resources	Enforce regulations against the use of child labor in mining and monitor the field. Has the authority to suspend licenses of mining operators who engage in child labor.(2, 13, 17)

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)

Organization/Agency	Role
Sierra Leone Police— Family Support Unit (FSU)	Investigate and prosecute various crimes, including child trafficking and child labor.(2, 13) Monitor and compile data on trafficking and crimes committed against children.(28)
Transnational Organized Crime Unit (TOCU)	Provide statistics and information on cases of trafficking in persons (TIP). Responsible for enforcing human trafficking cases.(28)
Ministry of Social Welfare— National TIP Secretariat	Develop a digitized database to track all TIP cases in Sierra Leone.(28) During the reporting period, the Secretariat agreed to collect TIP data from all ministries and NGOs, which includes victim, perpetrator, investigation, court case, and victim services. In February 2014, the Secretariat finalized data questionnaires that were given to relevant ministries, law enforcement posts, border posts, and service providers.(28)

Criminal law enforcement agencies in Sierra Leone took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2013, law enforcement agencies in Sierra Leone took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms. The CLU employs three part-time staff; however, reports indicate it lacks resources to establish branch offices to monitor child labor in remote areas of the country.(2) Research did not identify a budget for the CLU. The Ministry of Labor employs seven labor inspectors, four labor officers, and seven factory inspectors.(2) The Ministry created four new factory inspector positions and five new labor officer positions during the reporting period. With the exception of three inspectors, this staff is located in the capital and is responsible for enforcing labor laws in the formal sector.(2) Child labor is only one part of the job for these new Ministry hires. Labor inspectors lacked resources, including transportation and equipment, to conduct inspections. No child labor inspections were conducted, and no citations were issued during the reporting period.(2)

In April 2013, police officers, representatives from various ministries, including the Ministry of Labor, and factory inspectors, were trained in labor inspection and child labor monitoring. A standard checklist was developed, which includes items related to child labor.(2, 10, 11) The Government has a mechanism to refer cases to police and other government agencies.(2) During the reporting period, hundreds of village child welfare committees were set up in each of Sierra Leone's 149 chiefdoms.(2)

According to the Mines and Minerals Act, the Minister, after consultation with the Minerals

Advisory Board, can revoke licenses from license holders who are found to be using child labor.(23) However, information was not available on whether the Government has been enforcing this law.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2013, the newly appointed FSU director included proactive child labor investigations as part of the Unit's work plan.(2) However, no law enforcement officers were dedicated to proactive investigations into cases of child forced labor, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and use of children in illicit activities; no proactive investigations took place during the reporting period.(2) In 2013, police investigated 24 cases of child trafficking nationwide and 163 cases of "child cruelty," which can include child labor-related offenses.(2, 28) Charges were filed in two of those cases, one was brought to court, and 10 remain under investigation.(28) Generally, reported complaints are referred to the FSU for action. The Government established a complaint line for issues related to child protection, but it is not targeted toward child labor.(2) The Government prosecuted cases under the Anti-Trafficking and Sexual Offenses Act during the reporting period, but no information was available on these cases.(2, 17)

The Sierra Leone Police had no funding for investigating child labor issues, and reports indicate a lack of funding necessary for sufficient office facilities, transportation, and fuel.(2, 10)

During the reporting period, the Government finalized plans to establish the Freedom Line, a 24-hour hotline staffed by the Sierra Leone Police Communications Unit, and to train its staff on how to refer cases to police, welfare, and judicial responders.(28)

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 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Task Force	Coordinate the needs and requirements of agencies involved in providing shelter and services for victims, gather some data on reported trafficking cases, and meet regularly to develop policy and address the issue of child trafficking.(2, 6, 32) Chaired by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs, it includes the Ministries of Justice, Labor, Education, Internal Affairs, Information, Health, Foreign Affairs, Tourism, Local Government, Youth, and Sierra Leone Police.(28) Drafted guidelines in 2013 for identifying trafficking in persons and a trafficking action plan. During the reporting period, Task Force members raised awareness on TIP, collaborated with other government agencies on several cases, and coordinated with local government officials outside Freetown.(28)
National Technical Steering Committee on Child Labor	Meet on an ad-hoc basis to discuss major issues related to child labor as they arise.(2, 16)

Though the Ministry of Social Welfare submitted plans and a budget to establish the inter-agency National Commission for Children to coordinate and exchange information, as mandated by the Child Rights Act, the Commission has yet to be established or funded. During the fourth quarter of 2013, the Ministry of Social Welfare received a budget of approximately \$4,650 for human trafficking-related activities.(2, 33)

The National Technical Steering Committee on Child Labor did not meet during the reporting period.(2)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Sierra Leone has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Education Sector Plan (2007–2015)*	Implements education law and includes specific objectives to reduce child labor and school absenteeism, including making communities aware of alternatives to child labor and enforcement of labor rights and child labor laws.(34, 35)
Agenda for Prosperity†	Addresses child labor and the worst forms of child labor through expanded social welfare programs, establishment of conditional cash transfers, improved enforcement, and better education.(2, 36)
Transitional Joint Vision For Sierra Leone of the United Nations Family (2013–2014) *†	Includes strategies to increase school enrolment for vulnerable children and provide youth employment.(37)

* The impact of this policy on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Policy was launched during the reporting period.

The Agenda for Prosperity was launched during the reporting period. It is the country's third Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. The Agenda for Prosperity is a six-year development agenda, which includes strategies to combat child labor through the provision of social protection and education opportunities.(2, 36, 38, 39) Research did not find information on the implementation of the Primary Education Policy of 2001.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2013, the Government of Sierra Leone participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Program to combat the recruitment of child soldiers and child soldier prevention programs in local schools†	Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative-funded, 5-year program that provides child protection training for the police and army. Implements an education program, run by former child soldiers, in 45 schools across five districts of Sierra Leone to teach children about their legal rights, child soldiering and tactics used to recruit children.(40). The program will make child rights training mandatory for the local police and armed forces and outlines standards on how troops must engage with children in combat.(40) During the reporting period, the Government participated in this program, which trained troops on child soldier prevention strategies and educated children on child soldiering.(40) While child soldiering in Sierra Leone is no longer a problem, the project aims to prevent future child labor recruitment, given its prevalence during the civil war.(28, 40)
Youth Empowerment and Employment Program*	\$600,000 UNDP-funded, 3-year program launched in 2011 that strengthens national policy, strategy, and coordination for youth employment and seeks to provide basic support services for youth in Sierra Leone, including business development and career advice and guidance.(41)
Youth-to-Youth Fund	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development-funded program implemented in partnership with ILO, UNIDO, and Youth Employment Network. Provides youth with financing for small-scale projects aimed at creating employment for young people through entrepreneurship.(42)
Program to combat child trafficking and forced child labor in Sierra Leone	U.S.-donor funded project implemented by World Hope International. Rescues and restores trafficking victims in a Trafficking in Persons Recovery Center and combats trafficking through awareness and education at the community level.(43) In September 2013, the project, with the National TIP Task Force and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Social Welfare Ministry, trained law enforcement officials and social workers in Freetown, Makeni, and Bo on protection and identification of trafficking victims.
Shelters	Government program that refers child trafficking victims to private shelters that house child victims of forced labor and trafficking.(13) During the reporting period, shelters provided victims, including child victims of rape, forced prostitution, or forced labor, with physical, psychological, and spiritual care and supported the prosecution of the trafficking perpetrators.(28)
Centers for street children	Government program that provides psychological support, medical care, vocational training, and help in locating their families.(13)
Tackling Child Labor through Education (TACKLE) project	Jointly launched by the European Commission and the ILO to combat child labor through education in 12 African and the Caribbean countries and the Pacific group of states (ACP).(44, 45) Aims to strengthen institutional capacity to formulate and implement child labor strategies and conduct research and increase the knowledge base on child labor.(45) During the reporting period, trained factory inspectors and law enforcement officials to identify child labor violations. Government also drafted a National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor as part of the project.(9)
Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labor in West Africa and Strengthening Sub-Regional Cooperation through ECOWAS I & II	USDOL-funded regional projects that supported ECOWAS to strengthen its role in combating the worst forms of child labor in the West Africa sub-region by providing policy and capacity building support for all ECOWAS states.(46, 47)
Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries to support the priorities of the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016 established by the Hague Global Child Labor Conference in 2010. Aims to build the capacity of the national Government and develop strategic policies to eliminate child labor. In April and September 2013, conducted child labor training for labor inspectors and developed a Child Labor Action Plan.(16)
Disadvantaged Children and Youth Program in Sierra Leone	EU and Irish Aid-funded project implemented by GOAL, a humanitarian organization. Works to reduce child labor, child sex trafficking, and social exclusion of children by providing 2,000 children in Freetown with alternatives to child labor through expanded educational opportunities, family reunification, small business training, and grants for caregivers.(2, 48)
National Child Labor Survey	Government released data from the 2010–2011 report conducted by Statistics Sierra Leone and the ILO.(2)

* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Program was launched during the reporting period.

Although Sierra Leone has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.(2)

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 Sierra Leone (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Laws	Ensure that penalties are commensurate with the severity of violations.	2010 – 2013
	Establish a law to prevent the use of children in illicit activities such as drug trafficking.	2011 – 2013
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and ensure protections for child trafficking victims.	2013
	Increase the legal age for apprenticeships to 14 in line with ILO C. 138.	2013
Enforcement	Fully fund efforts and budget for activities to enforce worst forms of child labor laws, including providing adequate resources and staff to the Child Labor Unit of the Ministry of Labor.	2011 – 2013
	Provide police investigators adequate equipment and transportation.	2012 – 2013
	Ensure the Ministry of Mineral Resources revokes the licenses of operators who employ child labor.	2010 – 2013
	Establish branch offices to monitor child labor in remote areas of the country.	2012 – 2013
	Conduct more civil and criminal enforcement of child labor, including more frequent child labor inspections and issuing citations for violations.	2013
	Provide information on cases that were prosecuted using the Anti-Trafficking and Sexual Offenses Act.	2013
	Target child labor issues as part of the child protection complaint line.	2013
Coordination	Fully establish and fund the National Commission for Children.	2010 – 2013
	Convene more regular meetings of the National Technical Steering Committee on Child Labor.	2013
Government Policies	Provide information on the implementation of the Primary Education Policy of 2001.	2013
	Address barriers to education.	2013
	Assess the impact of the existing policies on child labor.	2011 – 2013
Social Programs	Develop and fund social programs to fully address the problem of child labor.	2009 – 2013
	Assess the impact of existing social programs on reducing the worst forms of child labor.	2011 – 2013

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