

In 2017, Ethiopia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government trained 110 labor inspectors on child labor issues and the Council of Ministers adopted the National Children's Policy of Ethiopia. In collaboration with the World Bank and UNICEF, the government developed Education Operational Response Plans for Oromia, Somali, and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region for the 2017/2018 school year. By the end of 2017, the General Education Quality Improvement Project II procured and distributed 178 million textbooks, teaching guides, and supplementary materials. However, children in Ethiopia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. The law in Ethiopia does not include free basic education or a compulsory age for education, leaving children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Social programs to combat child labor have not sufficiently targeted sectors with high incidences of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Ethiopia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (1; 2; 3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ethiopia.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	7 to 14	41.5 (10,202,669)
Attending School (%)	7 to 14	73.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	30.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		54.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (4)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Socio Economic Survey (ESS 3), 2015-2016. (5)

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	Planting and harvesting apples, bananas, coffee, cotton, and <i>khat</i> (6; 7; 3; 8)
	Herding livestock, including cattle (6; 9; 10; 11)
	Fishing
Industry	Mining† gold (12)
	Quarrying† (6)
	Construction,† including carrying heavy loads and digging (6; 9; 11)
	Making pottery products (6)
	Traditional weaving of hand-woven textiles (6; 13)
Services	Domestic work (1; 7; 9; 8)
	Unpaid household services, including carrying heavy loads of water and firewood (6; 7)
	Street work, including shoe shining, assisting taxi drivers, vending, portering, and begging (1; 6; 9; 11; 14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (11; 14; 15; 16)
	Forced labor in domestic work, herding, street vending, and traditional weaving of hand-woven textiles, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6; 17; 16)

† 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.

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Children are trafficked from rural areas to Addis Ababa and to other regions of the country for forced labor in the weaving industry and in domestic work. (6; 17; 16) Children also reportedly harvest and sell *khat*, a stimulant to which they may become addicted due to bodily contact with the plants' excretions during harvest. (3) Families continue to play a role in financing and coercing their children to go abroad or to urban areas to look for work. (18; 17) Children who begin as voluntary migrants may be forced into prostitution or become victims of forced labor. (3)

Many children face barriers to education, including the distance rural children must travel to reach school; a lack of sanitation, which especially affects adolescent girls; the requirement to pay for uniforms and supplies; and a lack of teachers. These factors increase children's risk of entering the workforce at a young age. (9; 19; 3; 8; 20) In the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) Region, sexual abuse, harassment of girls, and schools closed due to conflict are additional barriers to education. (19; 21)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Ethiopia 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 (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Ethiopia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work and the age for compulsory education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Article 89.2 and 185.1 of the Labour Proclamation (22)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18 [‡]	Articles 89.1, 89.3 and 185.1 of the Labour Proclamation (22)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 89.4 and 185.1 of the Labour Proclamation; Directive on Prohibited Occupations for Young Workers (22; 23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 18.3 of the Constitution; Article 596 of the Criminal Code; Articles 2.4 and 3–4 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (24; 25; 26)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 18.2 of the Constitution; Articles 597, 635, and 637 of the Criminal Code; Article 3.2 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (24; 25; 26)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 634–636 of the Criminal Code; Article 2.4 and 3–4 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (25; 26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 525 of the Criminal Code (25)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 270 of the Criminal Code (25)
Non-state	Yes	18	Article 2.3 of the Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (26)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

* No conscription (25)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (22)

Not all Ethiopian laws related to child labor are in compliance with international standards. Article 89.5 of the Labour Proclamation allows children ages 14 to 16 to engage in certain forms of hazardous work following the completion of a government-approved and inspected vocational training course. (22; 27) This contradicts ILO Convention 138, which prohibits hazardous work for all children under age 16. In addition, the Labour Proclamation applies only to children in a contractual employment relationship, which does not conform to international standards that require all children be protected under the law establishing a minimum age for work. (22; 27) Also, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover traditional weaving, an area of work in which there is evidence of using dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools; or work that involves the manual handling or transporting of heavy loads other than in the transportation industry. (22; 23)

Although it does not appear that there are any laws providing free basic education or a compulsory education age, the Education and Training policy prioritizes government financial support for students through grade 10, providing scholarships to outstanding students, and offering financial assistance to students in deprived regions. (28)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor of and Social Affairs (MOLSA) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA)	Conduct labor inspections of formal worksites at the regional level through its regional Bureaus of Labor and Social Affairs. (9; 29) Through its Occupational Safety and Health Case Team, enforce occupational safety, health, and wage and hour protections, which include child labor laws. (11; 29) Collect and analyze data and make policy recommendations on labor. (29)
Ethiopian Federal Police Commission	Investigate criminal violations of laws that protect against the worst forms of child labor. (30) Through its Special Child Protection Units in Addis Ababa and other major cities, combat child trafficking and assist vulnerable children. (31; 16) Through its Human Trafficking and Narcotics Section, collaborate with the prosecutor's office to investigate human trafficking, prosecute offenders, and report and collect human trafficking data. (32)
Office of Attorney General (OAG)	Prosecute criminal violations of child labor laws. Lead the Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Task Force. (9; 30)
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs	Develop and implement programs to protect vulnerable children and monitor alleged violations of child protection laws, including the worst forms of child labor. (2; 33)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Ethiopia took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the MOLSA that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the authority to assess penalties.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$388,000 (9)	\$54,390 (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	517 (9)	516 (3)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (9)	No (3)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (30)	N/A (34)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (9)	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (3; 34)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	52,937 [†] (35)	46,000 (3)
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown (9)	28,275 (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (9)	70 (18)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown (9)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties that were Collected	N/A (9)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (9)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (3)

[†] Data are from September 11, 2015 to December 31, 2016.

A significant decrease in the funding for the labor inspectorate from 2016 to 2017 prevented proper enforcement of child labor laws, particularly at construction sites, and in domestic work. (9; 29; 3) In addition, the penalties for violating child labor laws range from \$11 to \$44 and are too low to deter violations. (22; 29) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Ethiopia's workforce of 52.82 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, Ethiopia would employ about 1,321 inspectors. (36; 37; 38)

In 2017, World Vision Ethiopia provided training on child labor to 38 labor inspectors and 661 other government officials. (3; 18; 34) In addition, the MOLSA organized a workshop on child labor and human trafficking for approximately 60 regional government officials, trained 110 labor inspectors on child labor issues, and invested in new monitoring equipment for the inspectorate during the year. (18) In addition, with the support of Addis Ababa's city administration support, the MOLSA worked with clothing designers to develop a program to certify clothing as child-labor free. (18)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Ethiopia took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including collecting and publishing enforcement statistics.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (30)	N/A (34)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (9)	N/A (3; 34)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (9)	Unknown (3)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (9)	1,400 (3)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (9)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (9)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (9)	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (3)

The government completed 1,400 criminal investigations during the reporting period, mainly in the commercial agriculture sector, especially work involving cash crop cultivation. The number of violations relating to children is unknown due to a lack of age verification documentation. (3; 34) Although the government increased its enforcement efforts, it continues to focus on transnational human trafficking for the purpose of forced labor, to the detriment of domestic human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation as a result of child trafficking, which is a known problem in Ethiopia. (16)

Ethiopian immigration and border patrol authorities refer trafficking victims to NGO-run shelters, where they are given first aid and assistance to return home. Although the centers do not disaggregate data for children, NGOs reported that many of those receiving services were younger than age 18 years old. (3) Some of these trafficking victims were returning from Gulf States. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinate activities on the worst forms of child labor. Members include the MOLSA, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, and the Ministry of Education. (32)
MOLSA National Forum to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Combat the worst forms of child labor at the national level. Meets twice a year. Includes participants from the Ethiopian Employers' Federation and Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions. (32)
National Steering Committee Against Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children	Develop action plans and coordinate activities to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (33)
National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons	Address international exploitation, including the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, with representatives from five government ministries and regional presidents that meet twice a year. (26; 39; 40) In 2017, continued to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts and provided in-kind support to NGOs for victim services. (16)
National Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Task Force	Develop quarterly action plans and coordinate activities against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. Led by the Office of Attorney General and includes representatives from 31 government stakeholders and international organizations such as the IOM, the ILO, and the UNODC. (41; 26; 40)
Child Protection Committees, Child Rights Committees, and Orphans and Vulnerable Children Task Forces	Promote children's rights, provide children with food and school supplies, and train members on child labor issues, case management, international child labor standards, and Ethiopian child labor laws. Members include children, police, health workers, and teachers. (42; 33)

Research was unable to determine whether most of the coordinating bodies were active during the reporting period, indicating that limited committee budgets may still affect their ability to operate and coordinate efforts to address child labor. (9; 43)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor†

Policy	Description
National Children's Policy †	Aims to promote children's rights and combat child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and child labor. Promotes access to quality primary and secondary education, education in rural areas or for out-of-school youth. (44) Although the policy was drafted in 2009, it was formally endorsed by the Ethiopian Council of Ministers in April 2017. (34)
National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2020)	Includes guidelines on child labor identification, withdrawal, reintegration, and educational policies. Overseen by the National Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (34)
National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2015–2020)	Examines legal and institutional frameworks and responses related to the human trafficking situation in Ethiopia. Aims to provide guiding principles based on international best practices for anti-human trafficking action and the institutional structures and inputs needed to combat human trafficking. (45)

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor‡ (cont)

Policy	Description
National Youth Policy	Condemns the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and illicit work. Led by the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture. Lacks a detailed and specific action plan related to preventing the worst forms of child labor. (46; 47)
UNDAF (2016–2020)	Promotes improved access to education and livelihood services for vulnerable children. Seeks to protect children from abuse, violence, and exploitation, and rehabilitate them. (48)
National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) II (2016–2020)	Aims to develop a comprehensive and structured mechanism to strengthen human rights in Ethiopia, building on the NHRAP I, which included efforts to eliminate exploitative child labor. (49; 50)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (33; 51; 52; 53; 54)

The government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Sector Development Program or the National Technical Vocational Education and Training Strategy. (55; 56) Additionally, Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the above policies policy during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor‡

Program	Description
USDOL-Funded Projects to Address Child Labor	Aim to eliminate child labor through research, capacity building, and increased access to education and decent work opportunities. Includes: Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development (2013–2017), implemented in at least 10 countries by the ILO; Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues (2011–2017), implemented in approximately 40 countries by the ILO; and Engaged, Educated, Empowered, Ethiopian Youth Project (2014–2018), a \$10 million project implemented by World Vision, Inc. (57; 58; 59) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
ET Productive Safety Nets Project (PSNP4) (2014–2020)†	\$2.2 billion World Bank and donor-funded project that aims to improve access to social safety nets, including cash and in-kind transfers to orphans and vulnerable children. (60; 61) By the end of 2017, delivered food, cash, or a combination of transfers to 8 million project participants in 205 million households. (62)
Integrated Basic Social Services with Social Cash Transfer (IN-SCT) (2016–2018)†	UNICEF and the MOLSA-funded project in support of the PSNP4 that aims to improve nutritional and educational outcomes in the Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's region (SNNP) by providing vulnerable populations, including child laborers, with cash transfers. (63) A midline report published in 2017 indicates service providers are more aware of their roles and work collaboratively, including with law enforcement, resulting in greater awareness of the importance of education at the community level. (64) In 2017, provided 163,337 children with access to education and developed Education Operational Response Plans for Oromia, Somali, and the SNNP regions for the 2017/2018 school year. (21)
General Education Quality Improvement Project II (2014–2018)	\$550 million World Bank and donor-funded project that aims to improve learning conditions in Ethiopia through curriculum development, textbook assessment, teacher training, and school construction. (65) By the end of 2017, procured and distributed 178 million textbooks, teaching guides, and supplementary materials; 46,046 primary school teacher trainees and 9,139 secondary school teacher trainees are expected to graduate by 2018. (66)
Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE)	Aims to protect and support vulnerable children. Operates child protection units in police stations and established Community-Based Child Correction Centers to improve support for children in conflict with the law. (18; 67) In 2017, intercepted, rehabilitated, and provided psychosocial support for more than 1,000 trafficked children. (18)

† Program is funded by the Government of Ethiopia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9; 30; 68; 69)

Although the government participates in and implements several programs to combat child labor, these programs do not sufficiently target sectors with high incidences of child labor, such as agriculture and domestic work. (9)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Ethiopia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children are protected by child labor laws, including children working in non-contractual employment.	2009 – 2017
	Raise the minimum age at which children may enter hazardous work following vocational training from age 14 to age 16, in line with ILO C. 138.	2009 – 2017
	Ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive, including hazardous tasks in traditional weaving.	2016 – 2017
	Establish by law, free basic education and an age up to which education is compulsory that is consistent with the minimum age of employment.	2012 – 2017
Enforcement	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by permitting labor inspectors to assess penalties.	2013 – 2017
	Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient resources to conduct inspections in all sectors.	2009 – 2017
	Ensure that penalties are severe enough to deter child labor law violations.	2013 – 2017
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors in accordance with the ILO's technical advice.	2015 – 2017
	Gather and publish information on whether refresher courses are provided for criminal inspectors, the number of penalties applied and collected for child labor violations found, whether unannounced inspections were conducted, the number of prosecutions initiated, and convictions obtained.	2009 – 2017
Coordination	Ensure that established coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor have adequate funding to fulfill their mandates.	2015 – 2017
Government Policies	Develop an action plan on the worst forms of child labor for the National Youth Policy.	2009 – 2017
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Sector Development Program and the National Technical Vocational Education and Training Strategy.	2013 – 2017
Social Programs	Increase access to education by decreasing the distance to schools in rural areas, constructing sanitation facilities, eliminating school-related costs, addressing sexual abuse and harassment of girls, and re-opening schools closed due to conflict.	2010 – 2017
	Develop and/or expand social protection programs to prevent or withdraw children from all relevant sectors of child labor, including agriculture and domestic work.	2009 – 2017

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