

In 2016, Mauritius made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government hired additional labor inspectors, now meeting the ILO's recommendation for workforce coverage. The Government also established a mechanism to coordinate human anti-trafficking efforts and drafted a National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and a National Strategy for Street Working Children. In addition, the Government established an oversight body to monitor the provision of social services in institutional care facilities and shelters, which house orphans and child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. However, children in Mauritius engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The Government lacks a national policy to address all relevant worst forms of child labor and poor coordination continues to hinder the Government's efforts to combat child labor. In addition, social programs to combat child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.

Agalega Islands, Cargados Carajos Shoals, and Rodrigues are not shown.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritius engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.(1-5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritius. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|-------------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Working (% and population) | 5 to 14 | Unavailable |
| Attending School (%) | 5 to 14 | Unavailable |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7 to 14 | Unavailable |
| Primary Completion Rate (%) | | 101.1 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016.(6)
Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2016.(7)

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 | Producing and harvesting vegetables (1, 4, 5, 8) |
| | Feeding livestock (9) |
| | Fishing, including diving, and casting nets and traps (5, 8, 10) |
| Industry | Working in factories and masonry (8, 11) |
| Services | Domestic work (1, 5, 8) |
| | Working in apparel shops and restaurants (8) |
| | Street work, including vending, begging, and carrying goods in public markets (1, 4, 5, 8) |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡] | Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-5, 12) |
| | Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (5, 8) |

[‡] 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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Some children in Mauritius are lured into commercial sexual exploitation by their peers or family members, or through false offers of other employment.(2, 11) Mauritius has never conducted a national child labor survey, and therefore information on the prevalence of child labor in the country is limited.(5)

Evidence suggests that incidents of physical and psychological abuse, including corporal punishment of students by teachers, prevent some children from attending school, which increases their risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor. Because of discrimination, children with disabilities face serious barriers in accessing education.(1, 3, 13-16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Mauritius 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). However, gaps exist in Mauritius' legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

| Standard | Meets International Standards: Yes/No | Age | Legislation |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----|--|
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 16 | Sections 6 and 12 of the Employment Rights Act (17) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Section 12 of the Employment Rights Act (17) |
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | Yes | | Section 8 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (18) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes | | Article 6 of the Constitution; Article 2 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (19, 20) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes | | Article 11 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 13A of the Child Protection Act (20, 21) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes | | Article 14 of the Child Protection Act; Article 253 of the Criminal Code (21, 22) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes | | Articles 30.1b-e, 38a, 41.1f, and 41.2 of the Dangerous Drugs Act (23) |
| Minimum Age for Military Recruitment | | | |
| State Compulsory | N/A* | | |
| State Voluntary | N/A† | | |
| Non-state Compulsory | No | | |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 16 | Article 37.2 of the Education Act (24) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Article 35 of the Education Act (24) |

* No conscription (25)

† No standing military (25)

During the reporting period, the Government continued to draft a comprehensive bill to harmonize the existing legal framework related to children's rights and strengthen legal provisions for child protection.(1, 5, 26, 27)

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). However, gaps in labor law and criminal law enforcement remain and some enforcement information is not available.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

| Organization/Agency | Role |
|---|---|
| Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, Employment, and Training (MOLIRE) | Enforce all labor laws, including those related to child labor.(5, 12) |
| Office of the Ombudsperson for Children | Investigate any suspected or reported case of child labor or violation of a child's rights. Propose laws and policies to advance children's rights.(3, 5, 28, 29) |
| Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Minors' Brigade) | Investigate crimes of the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.(3, 5, 27) Maintain a database of all trafficking incidents involving children and refer all cases of commercial sexual exploitation to the Child Development Unit (CDU).(30) |
| Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare's (MOGE) Child Development Unit (CDU) | Enforce legislation related to children and implement policies and social programs related to child development. Provide social services to victims of the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking.(5, 30-32) Operate a central database for sharing information and taking action to address child labor.(5, 31, 32) |

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2016, labor law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

| Overview of Labor Law Enforcement | 2015 | 2016 |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Labor Inspectorate Funding | \$1.1 million (11) | \$1.2 million (5) |
| Number of Labor Inspectors | 55 (11) | 85 (33) |
| Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties | No (11) | No (5) |
| Training for Labor Inspectors | | |
| Initial Training for New Employees | Yes (11) | Yes (5) |
| Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor | Yes (11) | Yes (5) |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Yes (11) | Yes (5) |
| Number of Labor Inspections | 479 [†] (11) | 1,673 [‡] (5) |
| Number Conducted at Worksite | 479 [†] (11) | 1,673 [‡] (5) |
| Number Conducted by Desk Reviews | 0 | 0 |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found | 2 (34) | 0 (5) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed | 0 (11) | N/A (5) |
| Number of Penalties Imposed that Were Collected | N/A | N/A |
| Routine Inspections Conducted | Yes (11) | Yes (5) |
| Routine Inspections Targeted | No (11) | Yes (5) |
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted | Yes (11) | Yes (5) |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted | Yes (11) | Yes (5) |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists | Yes (11) | Yes (5) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | Yes (11) | Yes (5) |

[†] Data are from January 1, 2015, to October 31, 2015.(11)

[‡] Data are from January 1, 2016, to October 31, 2016.(34)

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Although the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, Employment, and Training (MOLIRE) works with the Child Development Unit (CDU) and the Minors' Brigade to refer victims to social service providers, research indicates that these agencies do not coordinate with the Ministry of Education to ensure that victims have access to education.(9, 11, 35)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2016, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Training for Investigators | | |
| Initial Training for New Employees | Unknown | Yes (5) |
| Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor | Unknown | N/A |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Unknown (9) | Yes (5) |
| Number of Investigations | Unknown | Unknown (5) |
| Number of Violations Found | Unknown | Unknown (5) |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated | Unknown | Unknown (5) |
| Number of Convictions | Unknown | 0 (5) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | Yes (27) | Yes (5, 11) |

During the reporting period, the Minors' Brigade, in cooperation with the CDU, received 17 complaints, including eight cases of child labor and four cases of commercial sexual exploitation.(5) In 2016, the police investigated at least three cases of child trafficking and referred three other cases of child trafficking that occurred before the reporting period to the Director of Public Prosecutions.(30) However, the total number of investigations, violations, and prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor is unknown. In addition, research revealed that criminal law enforcement agencies lacked staff, transportation, and other necessities to properly enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor.(12, 36)

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 8).

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

| Coordinating Body | Role & Description |
|---|---|
| National Child Protection Committee (NCPC) | Coordinate and implement activities on children's rights, including efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by MOGE and also known as the High Powered and Working Together Committee. (30, 31, 37). In 2016, the NCPC met twice to carry out awareness-raising activities on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry.(38) |
| Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Trafficking* | Coordinate human anti-trafficking efforts in Mauritius. Chaired by the Attorney General's Office and includes representatives from MOLIRE, MOGE, and other ministries.(2, 33, 39) |
| National Children's Council (NCC) | Coordinate child protection efforts in Mauritius as an independent, para-governmental entity under the auspices of MOGE.(3, 12) In June 2016, partnered with stakeholders to organize awareness-raising campaigns on children's rights in honor of International Day of the African Child.(5) |

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

In 2016, a lack of coordination between the National Child Protection Committee (NCPC) and the National Children's Council (NCC) hindered the Government's efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor.(3, 5)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

| Policy | Description |
|--|---|
| Child Safety Online Action Plan | Aims to prevent sexual exploitation of children on the Internet by strengthening the legal framework and developing awareness-raising programs. Implemented by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, in conjunction with MOGE, the Minors' Brigade and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.(3, 40, 41) In February 2016, organized workshops as part of Safer Internet Day.(11) |
| Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan (2008–2020) | Aims to improve equity of access to primary, secondary, and technical and vocational education, and to provide social services for youth. Overseen by the Ministry of Education.(42, 43) In 2016, developed 9-year schooling strategy to expand education access for children with learning difficulties.(5) |
| Government Development Program—Achieving Meaningful Change (2015–2019) | Aims to increase access to social protection services for vulnerable populations, including children, and emphasizes a zero tolerance policy for the use of children in drug trafficking.(26, 44, 45). |

In 2016, the Government drafted a National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and a National Strategy for Street Working Children; however, neither was approved by the end of the reporting period.(2, 5, 32, 39) Despite these efforts, research found no evidence of a policy to combat other worst forms of child labor such as commercial sexual exploitation.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2016, the Government funded programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor[†]

| Program | Description |
|---|---|
| Awareness-Raising Programs on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking [†] | Government program to educate the public on preventing commercial sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking.(2, 37) In 2016, the police educated 13,558 students in primary and secondary schools, as well as individuals in community centers.(5, 30) |
| Drop-in Centers, Shelters, and Institutional Care [†] | Government programs that provide rehabilitation services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Monitored by the CDU.(3, 27) In 2016, created a new Drop-in Center in Grand River Northwest that served 25 child victims, and expanded the <i>La Colombe</i> shelter in order to provide appropriate services to victims.(5, 27, 30, 39) |
| IOM Country Program | IOM program that builds the capacity of relevant government agencies to protect children from exploitation and human trafficking. In 2016, trained law enforcement officials on counter-trafficking in persons.(32, 46) |
| Education Assistance Programs [†] | Government programs that aim to increase access to quality primary education for vulnerable children. These programs include the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Program that provides educational support to 500 households in 229 geographic pockets of poverty and the Education Priority Zones that provide equal opportunities to primary school children throughout the country.(3, 43) |

[†] Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.

[‡] The Government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms.(3, 27, 37, 43)

In 2016, the Government established an oversight body to address the lack of appropriate standards of care, inadequate service provision, and overcrowding that exists in institutional care facilities and shelters that house orphans, child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and victims of other types of abuses.(5, 11, 29, 35)

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 Mauritius (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 the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under 18 into non-state armed groups. | 2016 |
| Enforcement | Strengthen the labor inspectorate by authorizing inspectors to assess penalties. | 2015 – 2016 |
| | Ensure that children identified during labor inspections receive all necessary social services, including access to education. | 2015 – 2016 |
| | Publish comprehensive criminal law enforcement information related to the worst forms of child labor, including the number of investigations conducted, violations found, and prosecutions initiated. | 2014 – 2016 |
| | Increase the amount of training, human resources, and funding for agencies responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor. | 2011 – 2016 |
| Coordination | Streamline coordination across agencies and encourage effective coordination between the NCCP and the NCC. | 2012 – 2016 |
| Government Policies | Adopt a policy that addresses the worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation. | 2014 – 2016 |
| Social Programs | Conduct research to determine the prevalence of child labor in Mauritius to inform policies and programs. | 2013 – 2016 |
| | Ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, can attend school without fear of physical or psychological abuse. | 2014 – 2016 |
| | Ensure that victims of commercial sexual exploitation have access to comprehensive and quality social services. | 2010 – 2016 |

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