

In 2012, Burundi made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government ratified the Palermo Protocol and continued to implement its National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor during the assessment period. Additionally, the Government drafted a new Poverty Reduction Scheme with civil society, NGOs, and the international donor community that came into effect during the reporting period. However, the minimum age for compulsory education remains below the minimum age for work, leaving children vulnerable to exploitation. In addition, the Government did not conduct any child labor inspections, nor did it train inspectors or other government officials on child labor law enforcement. Furthermore, while the Government has drafted at least three policies to provide greater protection to Burundian children, none have been adopted for implementation. Children in Burundi continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, many of them in dangerous forms of agriculture.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	7-14 yrs.	27.2 (633,126)
Attending School	7-14 yrs.	60.9
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	26.0
Primary Completion Rate		62.1

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from DHS Survey, 2010-2011.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Burundi are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, many of them in dangerous forms of agriculture; limited evidence suggests that children may be involved in the cultivation of bananas, cassava, maize, and beans.(3-8) Children in agriculture may use potentially dangerous machinery and tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(9, 10) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children also herd cattle and goats, which may make them vulnerable to injuries such as being bitten, butted, gored, or trampled by animals.(11, 12)



In urban areas, children are employed as domestic servants.(3, 7, 11) Reports indicate that children working in domestic service in Burundi are often isolated from the public and receive no compensation for their work.(3) Some employers avoid paying their child domestics by accusing them of criminal activity. Children have been incarcerated because of false accusations.(11) Children in domestic service may also be vulnerable to long working hours, performing strenuous tasks without sufficient food or shelter, and to physical and sexual exploitation by their employers.(13, 14)

There is limited evidence that children work in artisanal mining, which the Government includes in its list of occupations prohibited for children due to its hazardous nature.(10, 15-17)

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) exists in Burundi.(8, 16) While little evidence exists of large-scale child prostitution, girls are sometimes pushed into CSEC by older women who initially offer free room and board but then force the children into CSEC to pay for their expenses.(16) Poverty may also cause girls to enter CSEC for money for basic needs.(18) Male tourists also are reported to sexually exploit girls.(16)

There are reports that Burundian children are trafficked internally for work in domestic service and exploitation in the sex trade.(19, 20) Burundian girls are also trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to other countries.(16, 19, 20) Burundian children are exploited in forced labor in Tanzania. Children are also reportedly lured under false promises or coerced into forced labor in domestic service or agriculture.(16, 20)

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Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for work at 16.(10) Ministerial Order 630/1 sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18; employers who violate this may be punished under the Penal Code.(19, 21) Ministerial Order 630/1 also establishes a list of occupations forbidden for children under age 18. It includes working with automobiles, using industrial tools such as metal cutters, working in slaughterhouses, mining minerals, and serving alcohol.(3, 4)

International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	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	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

Burundi's Constitution prohibits forced labor.(9) The Penal Code forbids trafficking, agreeing to traffic, or profiting from trafficking of children under age 18. During the reporting period, the Government ratified the Palermo Protocol.(20) The Government has taken additional steps to enforce the Palermo Protocol by including sanctions for offenses against children in the Penal Code.(19) The Penal Code does not, however, contain explicit penalties for forced labor.(19)

The Penal Code criminalizes recruiting and using children under age 18 for child pornography or prostitution or for profiting from such practices. It is also illegal to use children in other illicit activities.(21)

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.(9) The Penal Code sets 18 as the minimum age for military recruitment and makes the military use of children under age 16 a war crime.(9, 22, 23) The ILO Committee of Experts has expressed concern over the potential use of children ages 16 and 17 in armed conflict and has urged the Government to raise the age to 18.(24)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Multisectoral Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor coordinates efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. The Committee consists of nine members from the Government, civil society, and UNICEF.(7) The Committee meets once every two months or when an urgent need arises, and the Committee's technical team meets once a month. The Government, UNICEF, and ILO-IPEC all provide funding for the Committee.(20)

At the local level, the Government's Centers of Family Development are responsible for the coordination and implementation of policies on children, women, and the family. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed concern that the Centers do not cover all regions of the country.(25)

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security is responsible for enforcing all labor laws, including those on child labor. The Ministry uses criminal penalties, civil fines, and court orders as mechanisms to enforce labor laws.(8) During the reporting period, the Ministry employed 15 inspectors to enforce all labor laws.(7) This is an inadequate number, given Burundi has 17 provinces and a population of more than 8 million.(29) Additionally, inspectors had limited funds and fuel for vehicles.(7, 26) Inspectors only initiate investigations in response to complaints, although a formal system has not been established to file such complaints.(7, 8) In 2012, the Government did not conduct any child labor inspections, nor did the Government conduct any training for inspectors or other government officials on child labor law enforcement.(7)

The Brigade for the Protection of Women and Children within the National Police is responsible for, among other things, enforcing criminal violations of the worst forms of child labor and is mandated to protect children from criminal influences and harm.(7) There are 243 officers in the Brigade: 86 in Bujumbura, one in each of the 17 provinces, and one in each of the 140 communes.(20) The National Police investigated two cases of child labor in 2012, but there were no convictions.(7)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government continued to implement the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor.⁽⁷⁾ The Government drafted a new Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan with civil society, NGOs, and the international donor community that came into effect during the reporting period; it focuses on reducing poverty, increasing economic growth and development, and strengthening government institutions, including schools. However, the elimination of child labor is not explicitly included.^(7, 15, 19, 20) The Ministry of Labor and Social Security has also adopted a plan to eliminate all forms of child labor by 2025; however, this plan has not yet been implemented, as the Government is waiting on UNICEF and ILO assistance.⁽⁴⁾ The Government also developed a National Policy of Child Protection and a National Strategy for Children Living on the Street with the support of UNICEF, but neither policy has been approved or implemented.⁽²⁷⁾

During the reporting period, the Government conducted two studies: one was to determine what sectors and geographical

regions use child labor, and the other was a rapid assessment of sexual and commercial exploitation of children.⁽⁷⁾

Education in Burundi is free and compulsory until grade six or approximately age 12.^(7, 8) This standard makes children ages 12 to 15 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are not required to be in school and are below the minimum age for work.

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

The Government relies primarily on NGOs to provide care and services for exploited children.^(29, 30)

The Government's Municipal Council for Youth and Children (CMEJ) aims to provide a network of services for street children, former child soldiers, and child trafficking victims. The CMEJ was established in 2009 and began drafting an action plan in 2010.⁽²⁸⁾ However, it is not yet operational.⁽²⁰⁾

Research did not identify any other programs to combat the worst forms of child labor.⁽⁷⁾

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Amend the Penal Code to contain explicit penalties for forced labor and to make the military use of children under age 18 a crime.	2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Devote additional resources to enforcement, including increasing the number of inspectors, establishing a system for filing complaints, and targeting investigations in sectors where a high prevalence of child labor exists.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Expand the Centers of Family Development to cover all regions of the country.	2011, 2012
Policies	Assess the impact of the Poverty Reduction Scheme on child labor. Establish a policy framework that protects children, including by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the current draft plan of action for eliminating child labor by 2025. • Making the CMEJ operational. • Raising the age for free and compulsory education to 16, the minimum age for work. 	2010, 2011, 2012 2011, 2012 2010, 2011, 2012
Social Programs	Implement programs to address all of the worst forms of child labor in the country.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

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