

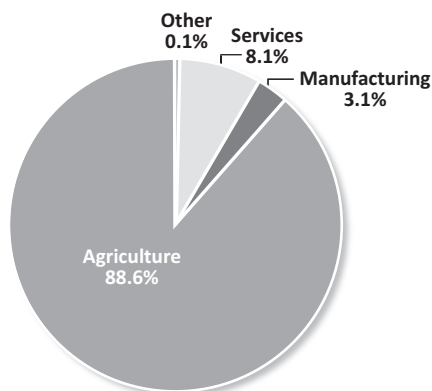
In 2012, Cameroon made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government ratified the *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, and the Ministry of Social Affairs updated the procedure manual for the adoption of children to reduce the risk of adopted children being trafficked. However, the Government has yet to approve its *National Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking in Children*. Additionally, gaps remain in the legislative framework, leaving children without protection against the worst forms of child labor. Furthermore, social programs are limited and do not address all sectors in which children work. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including dangerous activities in agriculture.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	36.5 (1,749,094)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	80.4
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	34.1
Primary Completion Rate		78.3



Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



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 ECAM3 Survey, 2007.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Cameroon are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in dangerous forms of agriculture. Many

are involved in the production of cocoa.(3-6) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children also reportedly work in the production of bananas, coffee, palm oil, rubber, and tea.(3, 7) Many children working in agriculture handle pesticides and sharp tools, till soil, and transport heavy loads.(3, 5, 8) Reports also suggest that children raise livestock, such as cattle, although evidence did not indicate how widespread the problem is.(3, 6, 9) Children working with livestock may suffer injuries such as being bitten, butted, gored, or trampled by animals.(10)

Children, primarily girls, work as domestic servants.(11-13) Child domestics may work long hours and are isolated in private homes, which makes them susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(14) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, there are reports that children also work in artisanal gold mines and gravel quarries, working long hours to fill and transport wheelbarrows of sand or gravel, and breaking stones. Children breaking stones may be injured by their tools or stone chips.(7, 12, 15-19)

In the urban informal sector, children carry heavy luggage and sell goods such as cigarettes and water on the

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streets.(7, 12, 20-24) Children working on the streets are vulnerable to violence, exploitation, drugs, and other crimes.(13, 22) Street children who live in cities such as Yaoundé and Douala transport drugs, which puts them at risk of being recruited into gangs.(23, 25) Some children drive commercial motorcycles, usually without the proper license, and often cause traffic accidents.(20-23)

Some children in Cameroon are forced to beg. Especially in the three Northern regions, it is a tradition to send boys to Koranic teachers to receive education.(17, 18, 24, 26) While some boys receive lessons, others are forced by their teachers to beg or perform other work and to surrender the money that they earn.(17, 18, 26, 27)

Children are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. Some children are exploited in commercial sex tourism in coastal towns such as Kribi and may be used in the production of pornography.(13, 23, 28, 29) The extent of the problem is unknown.

Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for the trafficking of children.(27) Most trafficking occurs internally and is prevalent in the Northwest region.(20, 30) Children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in domestic service, in restaurants and bars, and on tea plantations.(27, 29, 31-33) Children are also trafficked to work on cocoa farms and on the streets.(29, 31, 32) Children are trafficked to Cameroon from West and Central Africa for forced labor in street vending, agriculture, fishing, and spare-parts shops. Cameroon also serves as a transit country for children trafficked between Gabon and Nigeria, and for children trafficked to Europe.(33-35)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for work at 14. The Minister of Labor may make exemptions to the minimum age for apprentices after taking into consideration the local conditions and the types of work children may perform.(24) Law No. 017 sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18. It prohibits children from working underground, in restaurants, hotels, or bars, or in any job that exceeds their physical capacity or is longer than 8 hours a day in the industrial sector.(36) However, work underwater and at dangerous heights is often performed by children who fish or harvest bananas and is not deemed by law to be hazardous for children.(24, 36)

The law does not protect children working in non-contractual and non-industrial undertakings, such as agriculture, domestic

service, and street vending, even though many children are known to work in these sectors.(6, 24, 36) In addition, the Government lacks a mechanism for protecting children engaged in child labor in unregistered enterprises.(18, 31)

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	No
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

Law No. 98/004 mandates compulsory primary education. Children are required to attend school until age 12.(19, 37) This makes children ages 12 to 14 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. Presidential Decree No. 2001/041 establishes the right to a free education. In practice, additional school fees and the costs of books and uniforms are prohibitive for many families.(18, 19, 38, 39) The Ministry of Education offers disadvantaged primary students fee waivers; however, they are sometimes inadequate to cover the costs or are late, which means that parents must still pay some out-of-pocket fees.(3, 40) An article in the Cameroon Tribune reports that parent-teacher associations are the main source of funding for schools. The article alleges that many of these associations are corrupt and that the fees paid by parents do not go toward improving infrastructure or resources for the students.(41) Access to education is also hindered by the remote locations of schools and the lack of potable water in rural schools.(42, 43) In addition, the Government of Cameroon reports that in many regions, fewer than 40 percent of children are registered at birth. Unregistered children

in Cameroon cannot access essential services, including schooling.(18, 22)

The Constitution and Law No. 15 both prohibit slavery and servitude, and Law No. 15 provides penalties for those found to be in violation of the law.(44, 45) Law No. 15 also prohibits child trafficking.(44) The Penal Code prohibits forced labor, slavery, prostitution, the corruption of youth, and kidnapping.(8, 44, 46, 47) Law No. 2010/12, related to cybersecurity and cybercrime in Cameroon, prohibits electronic forms of child pornography; the Penal Code prohibits obscene publications.(37, 44, 47) The Government has not criminalized the use of children for illicit activities, which is a documented worst form of child labor in Cameroon.(25, 48)

Military service is not compulsory, and the minimum age for voluntary recruitment is 18. Children younger than age 18 can participate in military service with parental consent.(49, 50) During the reporting period, the Government ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.(3)

The law Project Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery criminalizes human trafficking, slavery, and debt bondage.(3, 51) This law extends culpability to accomplices and corporate entities and provides prison terms and fines for violators. In cases of debt bondage, penalties are doubled when the perpetrator is the guardian of the victim.(51)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Interagency Consultative Committee to Implement the ILO-IPEC West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture Program to Combat Hazardous and Exploitive Child Labor (WACAP) project is authorized to coordinate efforts to combat child labor in Cameroon.(52, 53) This Committee was established under a USDOL-funded project with the ILO-IPEC and is composed of the Ministries of Labor and Social Security, Social Affairs, Justice, External Relations, Women's Empowerment and the Family, Territorial Administration and Decentralization, and Tourism; the Secretariat of State for Defense; the General Delegation for National Security; and the Ministry of Finance Customs Services for both seaports and airports.(52) However, the Consultative Committee to Implement the ILO-IPEC/WACAP project has not met for several years.(45)

The Government's Inter-Ministerial Committee coordinates government efforts to combat trafficking in persons, including training stakeholders, proposing legislation, and ratifying

international instruments.(3) In July 2012, the Committee trained 30 officials and members of civil society on topics related to trafficking in persons. The training was designed to build capacity for investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases, to increase understanding of international laws and standards on trafficking in persons, and to finalize draft amendments to the 2011 trafficking in persons law.(3) The Working Group on Special Issues, part of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, held a workshop on trafficking in persons in August 2012, with participants from government, civil society, and the media.(54)

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MOLSS) leads efforts to enforce child labor laws. Child labor complaints may be initiated by the victim, a third party, or officials from the MOLSS, and may be reported to a local MOLSS representative or law enforcement officer.(3) Once a complaint is filed, an investigation is conducted by the MOLSS. Minor offenses are usually settled at the ministerial level; serious offenses are handled by the prosecutor's office.(3) Labor inspectors conduct routine and targeted inspections and send their reports on labor violations to the regional officer. Labor violations are later addressed at the administrative level or are sent to the prosecutor's office for judicial action.(3)

During the reporting period, the Ministry employed 84 labor inspectors nationwide.(3) Ministry officials acknowledge that this number is insufficient, given the scope and prevalence of child labor in Cameroon. Additionally, each labor inspectorate receives, on average, less than \$2,000 for its total annual budget; this often leaves inspectors without the necessary resources, including vehicles and gasoline, to carry out their duties.(3) The ILO Committee of Experts has noted in the past that inspectors may be too busy resolving labor disputes to carry out their other duties, including inspections.(55)

Other agencies also play a role in child labor law enforcement, as well as in criminal law enforcement. The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms is charged with investigating human rights abuses, and the Minors Brigade is responsible for investigating the use of children in hazardous work and trafficking.(56, 57) The Government has also created within the General Delegation for National Security, a vice squad, which is a police division established to coordinate efforts to combat sexual exploitation and the worst forms of child labor.(3, 53) The police, *gendarmes* (a paramilitary body charged with serving as an armed police force for the maintenance of public order, especially in rural areas), and border officials help combat the worst forms of child labor nationwide.(3, 8)

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The Government's Joint Mobile Brigade works to prevent and combat the phenomenon of street children. The Brigade includes representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Public Health, Youth and Civic Education, Women's Empowerment and the Family, the Secretariat of State for Defense in charge of the National Gendarmerie; the General Delegation for National Security; and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization.(3)

The Government did not have comprehensive statistics on the number of child labor violations for 2012. However, one regional appeals court reported trying five cases of child trafficking and exploitation.(3) Two cases were settled out of court, and the remaining three are pending as of the writing of this report. Additionally, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security identified 285 new cases of street children, returning 207 to their families and placing another 25 in specialized institutions.(3)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government drafted a National Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking in Children. However, it has yet to ratify or officially approve the plan, and it is unknown whether the plan addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, including agriculture, domestic service, and mining.(45, 58, 59) Cameroon's strategy to implement its Trafficking in Persons Action Plan outlines efforts to prosecute and convict trafficking offenders, educate law enforcement personnel and social workers on the laws against child trafficking, develop and enact legislation prohibiting the trafficking of adults, train enforcement personnel to use the human trafficking database, and investigate reports of hereditary servant abuse.(60) However, it does not include timelines.(8, 60)

Cameroon has included child labor concerns in relevant development agendas and key social policy documents, including its PRSP and the National Policy Framework Document for the Full Development of the Young Child, which charts needed action in health, education, and social protection.(3, 61, 62) However, the PRSP does not have budgets or detailed action plans related to the worst forms of child labor.(62) The Government does not appear to have addressed whether these policies have an impact on child labor. The Government also appoints Child Parliamentarians to provide recommendations on issues related to children, including child labor.(63)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Social Affairs updated the procedure manual for the adoption of children to reduce the risk of adopted children being trafficked.(3)

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

Cameroon continued to participate in the USDOL-funded, 4-year Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues project. This \$15-million regional project aims to build the capacity of national governments and to develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor and forced labor; improve the evidence base through data collection and research; and strengthen legal protections and social service delivery for child domestic workers.(64, 65) Cameroon, in partnership with Plan International, also participated in a 3-year project in the Fundong, Belo, Bafut, and Mbengwi Council areas to provide first aid and counseling for 2,600 vulnerable children and victims of abuse.(8, 66)

The Government operates a school feeding program that focuses on improving the educational attainment level of girls in target geographic zones, primarily in Northern regions, which have the country's highest rates of child labor participation. However, the program has reached only 5.3 percent of students in those target zones.(40, 67)

The Ministry of Social Affairs provides limited direct cash transfers to street children on an ad hoc basis.(40)

During the reporting period, Cameroon continued a nationwide awareness-raising campaign on the exploitation of children, and a program to combat child sex tourism. The campaign directly affected 5,000 children, parents, teachers, and peer educators in four regions of Cameroon (Northwest, Southwest, West, and Littoral).(8, 45) The Government, in collaboration with the UNICEF, also continued an awareness-raising campaign on the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. As part of this effort, the Government distributed pamphlets and posters with anti-trafficking messages in schools.(3, 68)

The Government maintained its engagement with the Project to Fight the Phenomenon of Street Children, which gathers information on street children and offers health care, education, and psychosocial care.(8, 45) In addition, Cameroon continued to implement its 2008-2012 cooperative agreement to protect and provide services to child trafficking victims.(8, 45, 69)

The Government began a project to educate children on their

own rights.(3) The Government also continued to provide some nonfinancial support to an NGO-run project focusing on domestic workers.(45)

Despite the initiatives described here, Cameroon's social programs do not address all the sectors in which children work, such as agriculture and domestic service.(8, 67)

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Provide legal protection to children working in non-contractual and non-industrial undertakings.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Prohibit children under age 18 from engaging in dangerous activities, such as working underwater and at dangerous heights, and enact legislation to prohibit the use, procurement, or offering of children for illicit activities.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Develop a mechanism for protecting children in unregistered enterprises, including in agriculture.	2011, 2012
	Raise the age for compulsory education to 14, to match the established minimum age for work.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Ensure that additional school fees and the costs of books and uniforms do not hinder children from accessing education.	2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Ensure the Consultative Committee to Implement the ILO-IPEC/WACAP project meets regularly to coordinate efforts to combat child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Ensure that the number of labor inspectors is sufficient given the scope and prevalence of child labor in Cameroon and allocate more resources for vehicles and fuel to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Gather and make publicly available information about child labor investigations and enforcement.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Policies	Formally adopt the National Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking in Children and ensure that it addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, including agriculture, domestic service, and mining.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Assess the impact that existing policies may have on addressing child labor, including the National Policy Framework Document for the Full Development of the Young Child and the PRSP.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Include in the PRSP both budgets and detailed action plans related to the worst forms of child labor.	2011, 2012
	Include a detailed timeline in the strategy to implement the Trafficking in Persons Action Plan.	2010, 2011, 2012
Social Programs	Develop social protection programs that assist children working in the worst forms of child labor in sectors such as agriculture and domestic service and expand existing programs.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Ensure the registration of all children at birth.	2011, 2012

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