

In 2014, Maldives made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Family and Child Protection Unit established four new “safe homes” to provide short-term protection for women and children. Anti-trafficking units, consisting of 10 officers dedicated to investigating human trafficking, were created in the Maldives Police Service (MPS) and the Department of Immigration and Emigration (DIE). The Government also continued to fund and participate in programs to improve access to education. Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Maldives are engaged in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The Government has not determined specific hazardous occupations or activities that are prohibited for children and the compulsory education age of 13 leaves children ages 13 to 15 vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Maldives are engaged in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Maldives. 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)	5-14 yrs.	3.9 (2,364)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	79.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	4.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2009, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(5)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2009.(6)

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	Fishing,* activities unknown (7)
Services	Domestic work* (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation* sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (1-4)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a) – (c) of ILO C. 182.

There is a lack of current data on child labor in Maldives and a national survey on child labor has not been conducted. Some girls from Bangladesh and Maldives are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to Malé, the capital, but evidence of the problem is limited.(1, 2, 8, 9) The Maldives Human Rights Commission is assessing the scope of the trafficking in persons problem in the country, but its findings have not yet been published.(10, 11)







II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Maldives has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Maldives

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

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).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 6 of the Employment Act; Sections 26 and 27 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children (12, 13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 7 of the Employment Act; Sections 26 and 27 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children (12, 13)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 25 of the Constitution; Section 3 of the Employment Act (12, 14)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 12–15 of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (15)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 17, 18, and 19 of the Special Provisions Act to Deal with Child Sex Abuse Offenders; Ministry of Justice Circular on the Penalty for Fornication and Sexual Offenders (8, 16)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 133 of the Drugs Act (17)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children (11)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	13	Legislation title unknown (18)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 36 of the Constitution (14)

* No conscription (19)

While the legal framework prohibits the employment of children in work that may be detrimental to their health and safety, the Government has not determined specific hazardous occupations and/or activities that are prohibited for children.⁽²⁾ While the Drugs Act prohibits the use of a child in drug trafficking, research found no evidence that the use of children in illicit activities, in general, is prohibited.⁽¹⁷⁾ The law making education compulsory only until the age of 13 leaves children ages 13 to 15 vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor because they are not required to be in school, yet they are not permitted to work.

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
Labor Relations Authority (LRA), Ministry of Economic Development (MED)	Enforce the child labor provisions of the Employment Act. Assess minor fines and make recommendations to the Minister of Human Resources on additional fines or other actions to penalize violators.(9)
Family and Child Protection Unit, Maldives Police Service (MPS)	Investigate complaints of child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Refer cases to the Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution.(2, 9)
Prosecutor General's Office	Prosecute crimes, including those involving the worst forms of child labor.(9)
Family Child Protection Services (FCPS), Ministry of Law and Gender (MLG)	Receive referrals of children who have been exploited, including in child prostitution, and provide care for such victims.(9)
Department of Immigration and Emigration (DIE)	Maintain a blacklist of employers who violate any provision of the Employment Act; prohibit blacklisted employers from hiring new workers until violations are corrected. Identify victims of trafficking in coordination with the MPS.(9)
Anti-Trafficking Units, MPS and the DIE	Investigate human trafficking-related offences and enforce laws prohibiting trafficking in persons.(20)

Research found no evidence that labor law enforcement agencies in Maldives took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Labor Relations Authority (LRA) employed nine labor officers and four investigation officers to inspect for any violations of the Employment Act. The LRA officers carried out 120 inspections and did not detect any child labor law violations.(21) Labor inspectors did not receive any training during the reporting period.(21)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2014, the anti-trafficking units in the Maldives Police Service consisted of seven officers, including three female officers.(20, 21) The Family and Child Protection Unit employed 25 officers to process child abuse cases in Malé, as well as an unknown number of officers in police stations throughout the country's many islands. The Prosecutor General's Office employed 45 prosecutors for all areas of its work, across the country.(9) Investigators do not have sufficient funding and resources, such as office facilities and transportation.(9) Police and other officials do not have adequate training on procedures for identifying trafficking victims and providing referrals for protective services, including for children.(1) Information is not available on the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of crimes involving the worst forms of child labor for the reporting period.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Although the Government has established a committee to coordinate actions regarding human trafficking, research found no evidence of mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including all its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Anti-Human Trafficking Steering Committee	Coordinate counter-trafficking activities and implement the country's Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan under MED leadership.(9, 22) Members include the MPS, the Supreme Court, the People's Parliament (<i>Majlis</i>), the Attorney General's Office, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the DIE, the Customs Service, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and the NGO Advocating the Rights of Children.(8, 15)

In early 2014, the Anti-Human Trafficking Steering Committee met a number of times to finalize National Guidelines and draft the standard operating procedures for assisting trafficking victims.(8)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Maldives

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan (2013–2014)	Sets out the Government’s goals to combat human trafficking, including to enact legislation prohibiting trafficking, strengthen interagency coordination, raise awareness, build capacity, improve border control, and expand international cooperation.(8)
UNDP Country Program for the Maldives (2011–2015)*	Aims to support ILO in developing a Decent Work framework to address youth unemployment. Aims to promote equitable access to justice and rule of law by increasing the capacity of the Prosecutor General’s Office, including training on human rights issues.(23)

* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

Although the Government of Maldives has adopted the Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan, research found no evidence of a policy to address child labor, including its worst forms.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Maldives funded and 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
FCPS Shelters and Rehabilitation Centers*	MLG-operated centers on many of the country’s islands provide services such as temporary shelter, vocational training, and rehabilitation and counseling for children in need, which could include children rescued from abusive work situations.(4, 10, 24) The FCPS established four new “safe homes” in early 2014 to provide short-term protection for women and children.(9)
Trafficking in Persons Victims Shelter	IOM-funded, Government-operated shelter on Villingili Island dedicated to trafficking victims.(8)
Blue Ribbon Campaign Against Human Trafficking‡	Government campaign, implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that aims to raise awareness of human trafficking in Maldives among students and the business community.(25)
Child Help Line‡	Government-maintained hotline used to report cases of child abuse and general issues that children face.(26)
UNICEF Country Program*	UNICEF program that works with the Government to monitor schools to ensure that authorities and communities maintain safe and sanitary learning environments for children.(27) Works to build the capacity of the FCPS staff to protect children from violence and abuse. Advocates for increased protections for children who are victims and witnesses of crimes.(27)
Enhancing Education Development Project*‡	World Bank and Government of Maldives project that aims to strengthen access to and the quality of primary and secondary school education in Maldives. Five-year project funded with approximately \$10 million from the World Bank and \$1 million from the Government of Maldives.(28)

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

‡ Program is partially funded by the Government of Maldives.

Social workers employed by Ministry of Law and Gender are in need of additional training.(9) Existing social programs do not specifically address the worst forms of child labor in the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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 Maldives (Table 9).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2014
	Determine specific hazardous occupations and/or activities that are prohibited for children.	2009 – 2014
	Prohibit the use of children in all illicit activities.	2013 – 2014
	Raise the compulsory education age to 16, the minimum age for work.	2011 – 2014

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives training on child labor issues.	2009 – 2014
	Make information on investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of crimes involving the worst forms of child labor publicly available.	2013 – 2014
	Provide sufficient funding and training to the police and prosecutors to ensure that investigators have the resources necessary to enforce laws on the worst forms of child labor.	2013 – 2014
Coordination	Establish a coordination mechanism to combat child labor.	2009 – 2014
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and preventions strategies into the UNDP Country Program for Maldives.	2014
	Adopt a policy to address child labor, including its worst forms.	2014
Social Programs	Conduct a national child labor survey.	2014
	Conduct and publish research on commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.	2009 – 2014
	Assess the impact that Maldives' child protection and education programs may have on child labor.	2013 – 2014
	Provide additional training to MLG social workers.	2013 – 2014
	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2014

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