

Eritrea

In 2011, Eritrea made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. While support for programs to reduce the worst forms of child labor exist, the Government continued to forcibly recruit children in grades 9 to 11 to work for 2 months during the school break for Mahtot—a national program in which children work in various services and agricultural activities. In addition, even though the law prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into the armed forces, some children under age 18 continue to be enlisted in the Government's required service program at the Sawa Military Training Camp. Gaps in legislation also continue to exist, including the lack of laws to prohibit trafficking for labor. Children in Eritrea are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic service.



Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate		39.8

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Eritrea are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, many in dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic service.(3-8) There is limited evidence that children in rural areas of Eritrea work on farms producing corn, wheat, sorghum and other grains; they also work in fields gathering firewood, hauling water and herding livestock.(3, 5, 7) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads and apply harmful pesticides.(8) Children employed as domestic servants may work long hours and are isolated in private homes, where they are susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(9)

In urban areas, children transport loads and work on the streets as vendors and car washers.(3, 5, 10) Children also work in garages and workshops making household utensils and furniture, which may require them to use dangerous machinery.(3, 5, 11) In Asmara, some children

engage in commercial sexual exploitation and street begging.(3, 5, 7, 12, 13) Children working on the streets may be vulnerable to severe weather, traffic accidents and crime.(14)

The Government of Eritrea imposes compulsory labor on secondary-level school children. Children in grades nine through eleven are forced to work for 2 months during the school break for Mahtot—a national program in which children are recruited to work in various service and agricultural activities.(3, 5, 15, 16) There is some evidence that these activities include building and maintaining roads, conducting maintenance of school furniture, building canals, terracing, installing power and telephone lines, working as domestic servants, and planting trees and picking cotton.(3, 5, 15-17)

In order to graduate, students are required by the Government to complete their final, 12th year of schooling and military training at the Sawa Military Training Camp in remote Western Eritrea. Some students may be under age 18 while attending Sawa.(3, 5, 7, 18-20) Students who do not attend are not eligible to take their final examinations or to graduate.(3, 5, 6, 20) After 6 months of compulsory military training, national service conscripts—who may be under age 18—are either drafted into the military, deployed to work in gold mines and on agriculture and construction projects, or assigned to a technical college for further training.(5, 7, 15, 21, 22) There is limited evidence indicating that students who avoid military service may be subject to torture and poor treatment.(15, 23)

Children in Eritrea are trafficked for forced labor, including commercial sexual exploitation.(3, 5, 6, 20) In rare instances, children are trafficked to the Middle East to serve as camel jockeys.(24, 25)

In Eritrea, children may enter the workforce at a young age because of the limited number of schools. Children from nomadic communities have difficulty accessing education, as their seasonal movements are incompatible with the formal school calendar.(26, 27)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

During the reporting period no new laws or regulations were passed related to child labor.(5) The Labor Proclamation sets the minimum age for employment at age 14 and the minimum age for hazardous work at age 18. Under this law, hazardous work includes transporting goods and passengers; heavy lifting; working with toxic chemicals and dangerous machines; digging tunnels; and working underground in mines, quarries and sewers.(5, 28) However, the Labor Proclamation does not require employers to keep a register containing the name, age or date of birth of their employees; it does not include penalties for employers of children in hazardous work or children under the minimum age. Further, the Government does not provide protection for self-employed children or children working without a contract, leaving many children working on the streets, in family businesses and as unprotected child domestics.(5, 28, 29) Children in apprenticeships may engage in hazardous work if supervised by a competent authority.(28) This includes dangerous and health-threatening tasks such as working in mines, quarries and sewers. It is unclear at what age a child may become an apprentice; however, there is limited evidence that the average age of admission is 14.(28, 29)

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	No
	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	No
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	14
	Free Public Education	Yes

Slavery, servitude and forced labor are prohibited by the Constitution.(30) The Penal Code prohibits and provides penalties for trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation, child rape and child prostitution.(5, 31) No law prohibits trafficking for labor exploitation.(6) Research did not uncover information on whether there are laws regulating the use of children in illicit activities such as drug trafficking.

Children under age 18 are prohibited from recruitment into the armed forces by Proclamation 11/1991.(32) However, in practice, some children under age 18 are conscripted as a result of the Government's required service at the Sawa Military Training Camp.(5, 7, 19)

The National Policy on Education states that children have the right to 8 years of free basic education beginning at age 6. The basic education cycle includes 5 years of primary education (grades one to five) and 3 years of junior secondary education (grades six to eight).(29) Education is compulsory until age 14.(29, 33)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Research found no evidence that the Government of Eritrea has established a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.(3)

The Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare is the primary federal agency designated to enforce child labor laws, including criminal violations of the worst forms of child labor, such as trafficking. Information was not made available for the reporting period related to the Ministry's funding level or labor inspectors.(3, 5, 20) Information was also unavailable on child labor investigations, prosecutions and convictions.

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Plan of Action on Child Labor and National Program of Action on Children are the primary government mechanisms to combat child labor in Eritrea. These policies prevent child labor and support victims by reintegrating them with families, communities and schools.(3, 5) Addressing exploitive child labor is also a goal of the UN Development Assistance Framework. However, research did not uncover the extent to which these development policies have been implemented or what their impact is on the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.(3, 5, 34)

The Government's compulsory labor and military training requirements for school children may diminish the impact

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of Eritrea's policies to combat the worst forms of child labor.(3, 5) The Government did not provide information that demonstrates it collects information on the worst forms of child labor.(3, 5)

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

In 2010, the Government participated in the Regional Program for Eastern Africa (2009-2012) to counter the trafficking of children; it also supported the Eastern African Police Chiefs Co-operation organization, a regional effort to improve its law enforcement capacity to combat human trafficking.(35, 36) It is unclear whether the Government was involved in either of these efforts during the reporting period.(17) However, through the support of the Ministry of Education, 14 new elementary schools were built for the 2011-2012 academic year to target nationals living in remote areas.(37) It is unknown if this is a sufficient number of schools for the given

population. The Government also supported UNICEF's efforts to provide 13,000 out of 21,000 out-of-school children living in the regions of Anseba, Gash Barka, Northern Red Sea and Southern Red Sea with an opportunity to access education through mobile schools and education programs.(38)

During the 2010 reporting period, the Government of Eritrea sponsored numerous youth and worker unions' education outreach programs about anti-trafficking in persons. Other efforts supported to combat the worst forms of child labor included the Government's program to provide shelter to orphans and vulnerable children.(3, 6, 39) There is no evidence the Government continued to support these efforts in 2011. Furthermore, the Government reportedly restricted the work of both national and international NGOs.(5, 7, 17)

Eritrea's social programs are limited in scope and do not protect self-employed children or target areas where the majority of children work, such as agriculture, domestic service and street vending.

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Amend the Labor Proclamation to require employers to keep a register containing the name and age or date of birth of their employees, and provide penalties for employers of children in hazardous work and children under the legal minimum age.	2010, 2011
	Ensure that self-employed children and children working without a contract are protected from the worst forms of child labor.	2010, 2011
	Establish a minimum age for apprenticeships and prohibit children in supervised vocational training programs from engaging in hazardous work.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Enact legislation to prohibit all forms of trafficking.	2009, 2010, 2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Publish data on inspections, criminal investigations, prosecutions and other steps taken to enforce laws.	2009, 2010, 2011
Policies	Implement child labor objectives in national policies and development plans by including budgets, detailed action plans and targets related to the worst forms of child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Cease the forced recruitment of children for purposes of manual labor under the Mahtot program during the school break.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Ensure that children under the age of 18 are not coercively recruited into the national military program.	2009, 2010, 2011

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Policies	Conduct a national labor force survey to improve the availability of data on all forms of child labor, including the worst forms.	2009, 2010, 2011
Social Programs	Develop appropriate social protection programs to protect self-employed children and children working in agriculture and domestic service from the worst forms of child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Improve access to education by building more schools and developing alternative educational programs for nomadic communities.	2010, 2011

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