

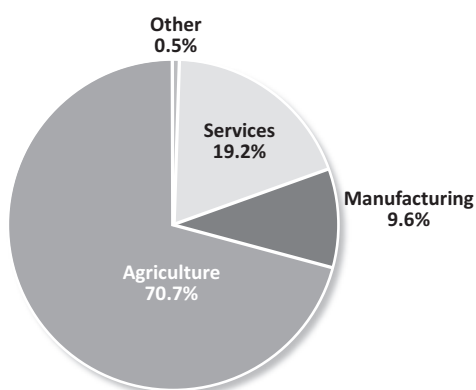
In 2012, Nicaragua made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government established a National Plan of Youth Employment (2012-2016) and expanded its Youth Employment and Migration program to protect working adolescents and increase their employment opportunities. It also expanded programs to improve livelihoods for families and eliminate child labor in stone quarries. Nicaragua was one of the first countries to ratify the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers. Labor inspectors have authority to inspect working conditions of domestic workers. However, the Government's enforcement of labor laws in agriculture is still inadequate due in part to resource constraints. Plans to combat child labor and protect children have not been fully implemented, and programs are insufficient to reach the numbers of children engaged in hazardous child labor in agriculture and victims of commercial sexual exploitation.



### Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	8.4 (109,380)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	84.9
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	7.0
Primary Completion Rate		80.9

### Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



**Sources:**

**Primary completion rate:** Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

**All other data:** Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from HHS Survey, 2005.(14)

### Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Nicaragua are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, especially in hazardous work in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.(2-6) Children work in hazardous conditions producing crops such as coffee, bananas, tobacco, and African palm.(7-13) Children have been found working in dangerous conditions in the production of oranges, rice, and sugarcane, although the extent of the problem is unknown.(2, 7, 8, 10, 12) These children often carry heavy loads, use dangerous tools, and are exposed to hazardous pesticides and fertilizers.(7, 8)

Children also work long hours risking injury in tasks such as breeding livestock, crushing stone, extracting pumice, mining for gold and collecting shellfish.(2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13) Children are employed as domestic servants in third-party homes in which they may face long hours and are often subjected to abuse.(2, 3, 15, 16) Some children engage in construction, which may expose them to intense heat and dangerous machinery.(7, 13, 17) Children may also work as bus drivers' assistants, often riding precariously on the exterior of vehicles or entering and exiting moving vehicles.(6, 13) Children work as street vendors and street performers at traffic lights, which may expose them to multiple dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents, physical and psychological risks, and crime.(2, 8, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19) Some children work as garbage scavengers and are exposed to toxic substances.(2, 8, 13, 20, 21)

# Nicaragua

Children in Nicaragua are exploited in commercial sexual exploitation, and although the information is limited, child pornography has been reported as a problem.(2, 6, 22, 23)

Nicaragua is a source and transit country for minors trafficked for sexual exploitation.(5, 6, 22, 24) Some children are trafficked within Nicaragua for sex tourism, which is reportedly on the rise, and to work as domestic servants.(6, 22) Persons without legal identification documents are at an increased risk of trafficking, and UNICEF has indicated that more than one-third of Nicaraguan children have not been formally registered with the Government.(2, 25) Children from poor rural areas, especially girls, are among the most vulnerable to trafficking. The victims are often deceived with promises of good jobs and then forced into commercial sexual exploitation in urban areas or neighboring countries.(6, 23) The Government reports that trafficking is a significant problem and that trafficking victims and brothel owners are linked to organized crime.(6, 26, 27) The Government has stated that the lack of economic opportunities, increased regional trade, semi-porous borders, and the development of communications technology have been factors contributing to the recruitment of children and youth into commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.(28)

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at age 14.(29, 30) Children ages 14 to 16 must have parental permission and be under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor (MITRAB) in order to work.(2) Minors are prohibited from engaging in work that may interfere with their schooling or that endangers their health and safety, such as work in mines, garbage dumps, and night entertainment venues.(29) The law imposes fines for violators and allows inspectors to close establishments employing children.(2, 31) The Labor Code requires employers of adolescent domestic workers under age 18 to facilitate and promote their education.(29, 32)

MITRAB maintains an updated list of types of work that are harmful to the health, safety and morals of children, applicable to both the informal and formal sectors. The list prohibits children under age 18 from working in mining and manufacturing or engaging in activities with exposure to toxic substances or that interfere with schooling.(13, 33) The Childhood and Adolescence Code prohibits the use of children in illicit activities.(30) MITRAB issued regulations specific to the 2011-2012 coffee harvest prohibiting children under age 14 from working, protecting adolescents of legal working age, and ensuring minimum wages.(34, 35) In October, Nicaragua became one of the first countries to ratify ILO Convention No. 189: Decent Work for Domestic Workers, which addresses

issues such as working conditions, wages, and child labor in the sector.(36)

## 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	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

In October 2012, the National Assembly approved a law to simplify, modernize, and streamline the public administration of labor justice, including child labor cases. The new law aims to improve the labor justice process by addressing complaints in a timely manner without sacrificing due process for employers and workers.(37)

The Constitution prohibits forced labor, slavery, and indentured servitude.(2, 38) The Constitution was amended in 1995 to prohibit compulsory military service. The minimum age for voluntary entry into the armed forces is 18.(16, 39)

The Penal Code establishes penalties related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including for the procurement or recruitment of children under age 18 for prostitution.(40) Promoting, filming, or selling child pornography is prohibited.(40) The Penal Code also prohibits trafficking of persons and imposes increased penalties for trafficking of individuals under age 18.(40)

The Constitution requires compulsory education through primary school, which is about age 15.(38) The Constitution establishes the right to free primary education, but associated school costs prevent some children from attending school.(11, 21, 38, 41-43)

## Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

MITRAB's National Commission for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of the Young Worker (CNEPTI) has been the primary institution that sets the priorities on child labor policy.(44) CNEPTI consists of a consortium of government agencies and NGOs that address child labor issues in the country through awareness-raising strategies and coordination of direct action programs.(31, 44) The Labor Code designates CNEPTI to receive the revenues from fines issued for child labor violations and to use them to raise awareness and protect minors.(45) However, it is unclear if CNEPTI remains the primary entity responsible for coordinating overall efforts to address child labor. Since 2009, the directive board of CNEPTI has convened only once in conjunction with the 2010 launch of the Roadmap for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor.(12, 16, 17, 33, 34, 46-50) The National Social Welfare System (SNBS) requires government institutions to protect the rights of children and adolescents.(51) Under the SNBS, Program Love (*Programa Amor*) is responsible for the protection of the rights of children and adolescents at risk, including those involved in street work, and their families. The program is overseen by First Lady Rosario Murillo, in coordination with the Ministries of Government, Family, Health, Education, and Labor.(26, 42, 51-53) Child labor experts have indicated that coordination between Program Love, CNEPTI, and MITRAB has been weak.(12, 16, 17, 33, 34, 46-48)

MITRAB's Inspector General's Office is responsible for all labor law inspections, including those on child labor.(12, 17, 51) MITRAB's Child Labor Inspections Unit conducts training on child labor for inspectors. It also is charged with ensuring that child labor issues are integrated into labor inspections and works with the Nicaraguan National Police (NNP), the Ministry of Family, and the Human Rights Attorney for Children to enforce child labor laws.(12, 17, 31, 32) The Ministry of Family and NNP administer a general hotline to report on the welfare of children, including reporting on trafficking and exploitation of children.(12, 16, 17)

In 2012, MITRAB had 90 labor inspectors whose responsibilities included investigating for child labor violations.(12, 16, 17) Government officials and child labor experts have reported that child labor inspections throughout the country, and especially in agricultural areas, are limited due to resource and personnel constraints.(16, 17) From January through June 2012, MITRAB conducted 2,546 child labor inspections, which was a notable increase from 761 during the same time period in 2011.(16, 17) During the first 6 months

of 2012, MITRAB identified 178 child labor infractions by employers, affecting 3,543 children.(16, 17) MITRAB reported that of the children found during these inspections, it removed 759 children from work, including from hazardous conditions, which was an increase from 148 children during the same time period in 2011.(16, 17) However, no information on fines associated with these child labor violations was publicly available.(16) In addition, although labor inspectors have the authority to enter private homes to monitor the working conditions of child domestic workers, research found no information on those types of inspections in practice.(54)

The Ministry of Governance is responsible for combating trafficking in persons, operating an anti-trafficking in persons unit, leading the National Coalition against Trafficking in Persons (NCATIP) and supporting a national protocol to repatriate children and adolescents who have been victims of trafficking.(16, 23, 27, 51) The NCATIP consists of government ministries, civil society organizations, and international NGOs, which aim to detect, prevent, protect, and rehabilitate trafficking victims.(27) Nonetheless, a 2009 evaluation of a USDOL-funded project found that institutional weaknesses in some of the agencies that participate in the NCATIP could hinder the effectiveness of the protocol.(55, 56) Research found no evidence to indicate whether these weaknesses have been addressed.

The Public Prosecutor's Office has two national-level prosecutors and 35 department-level prosecutors who handle cases of child exploitation, including child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illegal activities.(12, 16, 17) The NNP also has three units that address cases of human trafficking, including child trafficking. These units are the Police Intelligence Unit, which is responsible for detection; the Special Crimes Unit, which is responsible for investigation; and 54 Women's Commissions, which are responsible for prevention and protection.(6, 16, 17) In 2012, the Government closed three businesses in the City of Granada because of trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors.(16)

In 2012, the Public Prosecutor's Office prosecuted 24 trafficking cases and reached convictions in 14 of those cases; 17 child victims were involved in those cases.(16, 24) Prosecution began in October for a case of trafficking of three minors for sexual exploitation.(16) The Ministry of Family is responsible for providing care to child trafficking victims and has a unit specifically to address trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.(51) During the reporting period, 30 child trafficking victims were referred to the Ministry of Family for social services.(16) Although the Government provides shelter

# Nicaragua

and other services to some child trafficking victims, current services do not appear to be sufficient to assist the majority of child trafficking victims in Nicaragua. Instead, international organizations and NGOs are the principal service providers assisting trafficking victims.(6, 16, 17)

## Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government's Roadmap for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor sets the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labor by 2015.(16, 34, 48) The Government's current efforts to address child labor support the goals of the Roadmap, although an action plan to implement the broad goals of the Roadmap has not yet been issued.(47, 48, 50)

Data on child labor were collected in 2010 for the National Survey on Child and Adolescent Labor to better understand the country's current child labor situation.(57) However, data had not yet been released as of the end of the reporting period.(16)

The Government of Nicaragua prioritizes assistance for children and adolescents who work in stone quarries, mines, and in African palm cultivation through its Plan of Integrated Attention.(51, 58) The Plan involves coordination among several national ministries and local municipalities to identify the current situation of child labor and to design a plan of action to restore the rights of working children and adolescents for education, recreation, health and nutrition, and to promote better livelihoods for their families.(51, 58, 59) In addition, during the reporting period, the National Commission of Youth Employment established a National Plan of Youth Employment (2012-2016) to eliminate child labor and protect the rights of working adolescents.(58, 59)

The Government provides special protections for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons through its Policy on Special Protection for Children and Adolescents.(60) As a member of the Central American Parliament Commission on Women, Children, Youth and Family, the Government is participating in a regional Plan to Support the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents.(60) The Government oversees the implementation of the 10-year National Action Plan for Children and Adolescents, which supports children's rights.(61)

There are other national plans that include provisions that may have an impact on child labor. The National Program for Decent Work in Nicaragua (2008-2011) supports

efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2015 and includes specific provisions for assistance to CNEPTI and the National Commission against Commercial Sexual Exploitation.(41) Additionally, the Government of Nicaragua's poverty reduction strategy incorporates policy actions to eradicate child labor through the provision of comprehensive care and education.(16, 17, 50, 62) Despite this progress, the Government has not fully developed action plans to implement the above policies and programs.

The Government has adopted the UN Millennium Development and Education for All Goals, with an aim to meet them by 2015. With support from the World Bank and USAID, the Government's poverty reduction strategy has contributed to improved educational access, attendance, and quality in primary schools.(62-65) However, access to secondary education is more limited, primarily due to school costs and the need for youth to work to support themselves and their families.(21, 43, 62, 66) The ILO Committee of Experts indicated in 2009 and 2011 that secondary schools have not been targeted as a priority and secondary school attendance remains low—increasing the risk of older children's engagement in exploitative work.(22, 67)

In August 2012, the Government of Panama hosted the Meeting of Labor Ministers of Central America, Belize and the Dominican Republic to highlight good practices and lessons learned.(68-70) At the meeting, the Ministers signed the Panama Declaration committing themselves to specific actions by country to eradicate the worst forms of child labor.(71-73) MITRAB highlighted its programs in coffee plantations and stone quarries to address child labor as a good practice and its intent to continue expanding these programs.(71, 74)

Nicaragua also is a member of the Regional Conference of Migration, which implements an Action Plan with a special focus on child migrants and their repatriation.(75, 76)

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

The Ministry of Family has 23 departmental offices and 7 district offices in Managua that provide at-risk children and adolescents with educational and recreational opportunities.(51) The regional project, *Primero Aprendo* (First, I Learn), originally funded by USDOL and currently supported by the European Union, promotes the eradication of child labor through access to quality education, in support of Nicaragua's Roadmap to Eliminate Child Labor.(77)



The Government of Nicaragua has been collaborating with the private sector and civil society to eliminate hazardous child labor in the coffee sector and to achieve a child-labor free coffee harvest in the Department of Jinotega.(78-80) The Coffee Harvest Plan aims to develop a comprehensive approach to assist children whose parents work in the coffee harvest and improve educational opportunities for children on coffee plantations.(16, 22, 59, 74, 81) MITRAB and the Ministry of Education support the Educational Bridges (EB) program that provides education to children of coffee workers to prevent child labor during the coffee harvests.(47) The EB program was expanded in the 2011-2012 harvest, which included training an additional 60 EB facilitators and guiding improvements of EB venues at 40 coffee farms.(47) The Ministry of Education's School Passport pilot program provides migrant children continuity in their education so that they stay in school instead of work. The pilot program monitors internal migration and education in 13 municipalities that have significant school attrition rates.(47)

During the reporting period, MITRAB expanded a program in support of the Plan for Integrated Attention that aims to reduce child labor in stone quarries through improved livelihood opportunities for families. The Government reported removing 334 children and adolescents from stone quarrying and assisting 155 families in Chinandega, El Rama and El Bluff.(16, 17, 47, 59, 74, 82) The initiative provided the families of those children with training and equipment to generate self-employment.(51)

The Government of Nicaragua participates in a 4-year, \$8.4 million regional project funded by the Government of Spain to eradicate child labor in Latin America.(50) In February 2013, *La Chureca* garbage dump in the City of Managua was permanently closed and a recycling plant was opened in its place through a \$50 million project funded by the Government of Spain. This project also created a school and houses for the 258 families who used to find their subsistence in the garbage dump.(83-85)

Program Love targets 25,000 street children and their families, primarily in Managua, and aims to provide education for children and vocational training for parents.(26, 42, 52, 53) A 2012 technical progress report stated that in the reporting period, Program Love assisted 20,000 working children by integrating them into schools and other initiatives.(50) However, there are varied reports about the program's effectiveness.(16, 17, 86, 87) The Ministry of Education and Sport implements a national literacy and education campaign for children and young persons excluded from the educational system.(42)

The Government of Nicaragua also supports a Youth, Employment, and Migration Program that seeks to reduce the need for migration by improving vulnerable youth's access to employment opportunities.(88, 89) In the reporting period, more than 22 additional municipalities joined the program and pursued strategies that facilitate employment and self-employment for youth between the ages of 15 and 24.(59, 62, 88-91) The Government reported that in 2011, 970 adolescents and 1,183 mothers as heads of households completed pre-employment courses provided by the National Technological Institute.(51, 92) However, the impact these programs may have on child labor is unknown.

The Government supports a birth registration campaign in some areas of Nicaragua to facilitate access by undocumented children to social services and reduce their vulnerability to trafficking; however, the campaign is not nationwide, which leaves many children without the record of birth certificates needed to access basic social services.(46, 93)

Despite these efforts, current programs do not appear to be sufficient to address the extent of the worst forms of child labor in Nicaragua, particularly in the production of shellfish, pumice and agricultural products, such as African palm. The Government has identified the need to extend strategies to reach more children who work in other sectors, such as rice and African palm.(2, 17, 51, 78, 80)

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Coordination and Enforcement	Clarify the role of CNEPTI in coordinating government efforts to reduce child labor and ensure that progress toward this goal, including the forthcoming action plan, is monitored on a regular basis, including by convening more frequently.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

# Nicaragua

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Coordination and Enforcement	Publicly report on the enforcement of the law on adolescent domestic workers, which includes the employers' obligation to ensure the education of adolescent workers.	2011, 2012
	Dedicate more human and financial resources to the enforcement of child labor laws, in particular, in agriculture, such as hiring and retaining more labor inspectors.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Report fines imposed for child labor violations.	2012
	Enhance coordination and information sharing among actors involved in child labor issues and anti-trafficking campaigns.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Policies	Finalize and begin implementation of a concrete action plan to reach the objective of eliminating the worst forms of child labor by 2015.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Develop strategies and devote resources to improve attendance in secondary education.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Make publicly available the results of the latest national child labor survey.	2012
Social Programs	Expand birth registration programs nationwide in order to ensure that children have access to basic services.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Dedicate greater resources to expand services that assist child trafficking victims.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Assess the effectiveness of Program Love on reducing the worst forms of child labor and publicize its results in order to inform future efforts.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Expand programs to address the worst forms of child labor to more sectors in which exploitative child labor exists, such as shellfish and African palm.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Assess the impact of the Youth, Employment and Migration Program and the National Technological Institute's pre-employment program on reducing child labor.	2011, 2012
	Apply good practices and strategies used to eliminate child labor in the coffee sector to other sectors, including raising awareness and partnering with business owners to eliminate child labor in their production processes.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

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