

In 2012, Armenia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government adopted a strategic program on the protection of the rights of children in Armenia for 2013-2016 with a specific child labor component, and a National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons for years 2013-2015. The Government continued to support human trafficking awareness-raising efforts, and the police introduced a hotline for trafficking related calls. However, gaps remain in the establishment of a mechanism to coordinate child labor efforts across the Government. Likewise, the State Labor Inspectors lack training focused on the worst forms of child labor and there are gaps in programs to protect children from exploitative labor. Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor in the urban informal sector.



Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	8.1 (30,494)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	89.8
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	9.9
Primary Completion Rate		83.3

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.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children in Armenia are engaged in the worst forms of child labor in the urban informal sector.(3) A 2008 UNICEF report and other sources note that in urban areas, children engage in work activities that include construction, porter services, and scavenging for recyclables. Children who perform these activities may be at risk of long-term harmful health consequences, including arm and leg injuries, and back and waist pain.(3, 4) In addition, children in Armenia are engaged in seasonal agricultural work.(3) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools and carry heavy loads.(5, 6) Reportedly, some children miss school in order to work, especially during the harvest season.(3)

Reportedly, some Armenian girls are trafficked both internally and transnationally for commercial sexual exploitation. There are also reports that boys are subjected to forced labor within the country, particularly in forced begging.(7, 8)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 16. However, children between ages 14 and 16 may work for limited hours if they have an employment agreement with written consent from a parent or legal guardian.(9) Children younger than age 18 are prohibited from engaging in hazardous work.(9) A 2005 governmental decree defines a list of works that qualify as hazardous for children under 18.(10)

Armenia's Constitution prohibits forced labor.(11) The minimum age for compulsory and voluntary recruitment into the military is 18.(12)

The Criminal Code prohibits the trafficking and exploitation of all persons.(13) In 2011, amendments to the Criminal Code clarified legislation and strengthened punishments for the exploitation and trafficking of persons, and for children in particular.(14) Article 132.2 prohibits the trafficking or exploitation of children, specifically, and strengthens penalties to seven to 15 years in prison, depending on the aggravating circumstances.(13, 14) Article 165 prohibits involving a minor in criminal activities with expanded penalties. Article 166 separates the prohibitions against child pornography and prostitution from those against the involvement of minors

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in criminal and other illicit activities such as vagrancy and begging, and expands and clarifies both areas.(13, 14) Article 168 prohibiting the buying or selling of a child, has been replaced with an article that more comprehensively describes the crime and its penalties. The Criminal Code exempts trafficking victims from criminal prosecution for crimes of minor and medium severity committed as a direct result of being trafficked.(13-15)

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	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Armenian Constitution guarantees free schooling for all children.(11) Children in Armenia are required to attend school until age 15.(16) This standard makes children between the age of 15 and 16 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are not required to be in school or legally permitted to work. Inequities in education in Armenia remain as a result of physical disability, gender, geography, and family income, and compulsory education is not well enforced.(17-19) Some children reportedly experience physical and psychological abuse at school.(19)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Research found no evidence of a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor. Various agencies in Armenia are involved in child protection and an interagency National Committee for Child Protection is in place. The

Parliamentary Working Group on Child Rights continued to contribute to the strengthening of child rights institutions in Armenia.(20, 21) During the reporting period, the committee developed a draft joint decree for the Armenian Police, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA), and the Ministry of Health to establish a working group to identify effective strategies for addressing child begging to be included in the 2013 annual program for the National Commission on the Protection of Children's Rights.(22) The Government of Armenia's Council to Combat Human Trafficking, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, works at the ministerial level to coordinate government efforts to combat human trafficking, including that of children. On a lower level an interagency Working Group, chaired by the head of the International Organizations Department at the Foreign Ministry, assumes this coordination responsibility.(23) These two coordinating bodies met regularly in 2012.(24)

The Armenian State Labor Inspectorate (SLI), a unit of the MOLSA, is responsible for enforcing labor laws, including those concerning child labor. The SLI carries out inspections of registered legal entities.(22, 24) During the reporting period, the SLI employed 126 labor inspectors, a decrease from 140 in 2011, and had an allocated budget of approximately \$713,290. The inspectorate was also provided with 16 service cars and one laboratory car.(22) According to an SLI official, this number is not sufficient to cover the hundreds of thousands of entities in the country and to make proactive investigations to identify exploitative child labor.(23, 25) The SLI does not have a specific mechanism for registering child labor complaints, and since its inception in 2005, has not received any complaints of child labor or discovered violations through its regular inspections.(17, 23, 24) According to the Government, the MOLSA provided SLI labor inspectors with annual labor inspection training, which included issues pertaining to child labor.(22) As a component of the National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons for years 2013-2015, SLI inspectors received specific training on child exploitation issues, particularly child trafficking.(22) Research did not uncover information on the extent to which child labor was addressed or whether the worst forms were included in the annual training.

The Juvenile Police, and its regional subdivision, investigate crimes committed by children and those in which children are involved.(26) During the reporting period, 550 police officers from various units, subdivisions, and regional branches were trained on child labor issues related to exploitation and forced labor as part of its curriculum on trafficking.(24)

The Anti-Trafficking Unit of the National Police's Department of Criminal Investigation and the Police Investigatory Department's Unit to address Human Trafficking, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime are responsible for the investigation and enforcement of criminal laws against child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.(24) During the reporting period, the Anti-Trafficking Unit had seven field officers and the Unit to address Human Trafficking, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime had 10 investigators who worked on trafficking as needed.(24, 26) Employees of the police Anti-Trafficking Unit, the Unit to Combat Human Trafficking, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime, and other police officers participated in anti-trafficking courses throughout the year.(24, 26) The Government implements a National Referral Mechanism to assist victims of trafficking, including children.(18) Through this mechanism, children who are victims of exploitation and trafficking are reportedly referred to social service providers.(22) In addition, a border control information system is in place at the main international airport to help prevent trafficking.(18)

In 2012, law enforcement investigated 21 criminal cases involving minors. The charges included trafficking in persons, forced labor, prostitution, and pornography.(22) Of these criminal cases, four were sent to court, resulting in two convictions for forced child labor in trafficking and sexual exploitation, and the other two are in progress for similar charges. The convictions resulted in prison sentences of 11 years and 8 years, respectively.(22) In January 2013, a case was prosecuted, resulting in a conviction and penalty of 10 years' imprisonment for forced child beggary.(27)

Implementing the provisions of the Criminal Procedural Code on victim and witness protection continued to be difficult due to both the lack of funding and an appropriate victim-witness protection mechanism.(7, 27)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In December 2012, the Government adopted through Government Decree #1694-N, a new strategic program on the protection of the rights of children in Armenia for 2013-2016.(21, 22, 24) The child labor component of the program, "On approving the RA Strategic Program on the Protection of Children's Rights for 2013-2016 and the schedule of activities of the 2013-2016 Strategic Program on the Protection of Children's Rights for 2013-2016 and on recognizing as invalid the RA Government Decree of December 18, 2003 #1745-N,"

will focus activities in three areas: (1) data collection on working children, (2) awareness-raising on the rights of working children, and (3) implementation of an oversight mechanisms on children's work.(21) The program will replace the current National Plan of Action for the Protection of the Rights of the Child 2004-2015, which included the elimination of child labor as one of its themes.(17, 18, 24) In February 2013, Armenian labor inspectors, police officers, investigators, and prosecutors participated in a roundtable event on forced labor and human trafficking, including child labor cases. Participants discussed inconsistencies in labor legislation, collaboration, and coordination of activities in the field, and scenarios for identifying human trafficking cases for the purpose of labor exploitation.(21)

The Government of Armenia's National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2010-2012 addresses trafficking in children.(26) In February 2013, the Government adopted a National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons for years 2013-2015.(21, 27) The UNICEF has worked with the Government to develop a Country Program for 2010-2015 that includes an enhanced child care system, a continuum of child protection services to identify and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse of children, and a comprehensive policy framework for protecting vulnerable children.(28) The impact of these efforts on child labor has not been assessed.

The Government collects information on trafficking in children as part of its reporting on trafficking in persons.(24) However, there is insufficient data on all of the worst forms of child labor in Armenia, which hampers the Government's ability to formulate relevant policies and programs.(17) During the reporting period, the National Commission on the Protection of Children's Rights concluded that more recent country-specific data are needed on the worst forms of child labor in Armenia. As a result, the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs tasked the commission with identifying the requirements for conducting a broad survey on working children.(24)

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

The IOM, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Science, supported a regional project "Secondary School Education to Contribute to the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia."(27) The project aimed to introduce a module on counter-trafficking, including child exploitation, to the school curriculum.(29) As part of the project, a manual on human trafficking was developed and

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used to train 25 university teachers and 16 students. A syllabus containing a section on human trafficking was approved for 8th and 9th grade Social Studies curricula.(27)

Public Service Announcements aired on popular television outlets throughout the reporting period for the purpose of raising awareness on the issue of trafficking for both labor and sexual exploitation. In addition, the police introduced a hotline for human trafficking–related calls.(27)

Armenia continued to participate in several donor-funded anti-poverty initiatives to help the most vulnerable populations.(24) The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) plan for Armenia (2010-2015) has a strong focus on developing vocational training and technical assistance programs targeted at the most vulnerable youth.(21, 30) The Government is working with USAID to improve the well-being of the most vulnerable children by building the human resource and institutional capacity of the child protection system. The Stakeholders Acting Together for Strengthened Child Protection in Armenia is a 3-year project with a combined budget of \$2.5 million.(31) Government work with USAID

also includes a program focused on pension and labor market reform aimed to help individuals, households, and communities manage social risks and needs.(31) The impact of these efforts on child labor has not been assessed.

The Children Support Center Foundation offers child protection services and maintains a hotline for children in crisis.(25) The nonprofits Hope and Help and United Methodist Committee on Relief run helplines for victims of trafficking.(15, 23) In 2005, the Government planned that, by 2015, it would create 25 daycare centers to offer children alternative activities to work.(4) In addition to the two daycare centers in Yerevan and Gyumri, four day-time centers for children with special needs were fully operational in Dilijan, Ijevan, Noyemberyan, and Berd, serving 25-200 children.(26) The MOLSA jointly coordinates activities in the four centers with the NGO Bridge of Hope, which provides specialized services for children with disabilities.(22, 32)

Research found no evidence of any programs specifically for assisting children engaged in agriculture or urban informal work in the country.(24)

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Increase the age to which education is compulsory to match the minimum age to work.	2012
	Fully enforce the compulsory education requirement.	2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Establish a mechanism to coordinate child labor efforts across the Government.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Increase the number of labor inspectors and train them on child labor issues.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Implement an adequate victim-witness protection mechanism for criminal proceedings.	2011, 2012
Policies	Implement activities under the program on the protection of the rights of children in Armenia for 2013-2016 as intended under Government Decree #1694-N.	2012
	Address the gender, geographic, and economic barriers that prohibit some children from accessing education.	2010, 2011, 2012

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Policies	Collect data on children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in Armenia.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Develop policies to combat the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and the urban informal sector, and prevent children from working in hard manual labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Assess the impact of the Armenia Country Program's enhanced childcare system, continuum of child protection services, and comprehensive policy framework for protecting vulnerable children on the worst forms of child labor in the country.	2011, 2012
Social Programs	Create programs to address the needs of children in the worst forms of child labor specifically, such as children engaged in the agricultural and urban informal sectors.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Assess the impact of the UNDAF focus on developing vocational training and technical assistance programs on the worst forms of child labor in the country.	2011, 2012
	Assess the impact of the USAID's efforts to build capacity in the child protection system, and to improve social safety nets on the worst forms of child labor in the country.	2011, 2012
	Develop additional daycare centers to provide alternative activities for working children in all the regions of Armenia.	2011, 2012

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