

In 2015, Nicaragua made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government conducted its first human trafficking prosecutions under the Law Against Trafficking in Persons, which went into effect in February 2015 and raises penalties for the trafficking of children and adolescents to 19 to 20 years' imprisonment. The Government also reported conducting trafficking in persons prevention and awareness programs that reached 112,359 individuals, including law enforcement officials. The Ministry of Education expanded the National School Supply Program, which provided 700,000 packages of school supplies and 3 million textbooks to children in need. However, children in Nicaragua are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in street work and in commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking. National policies to eliminate child labor and protect children have not been fully implemented, and the Government appears to lack a specific and consistent mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor. In addition, the Labor Inspectorate is reported to lack the human and financial resources it needs to adequately enforce child labor laws across the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Nicaragua are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in street work and 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 Nicaragua.

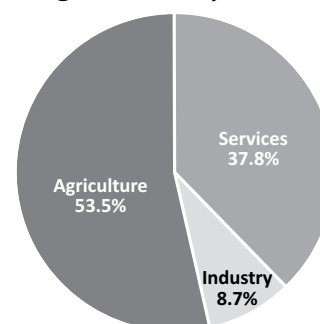
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10-14 yrs.	47.7 (342,076)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	88.3
Combining Work and School (%)	10-14 yrs.	40.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		85.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(5)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Continua de Hogares (ECH) Survey, 2012. Data on working children, school attendance, and children combining work and school are not comparable with data published in the previous version of this report because of differences between surveys used to collect the data.(6)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



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	Harvesting coffee, bananas, tobacco,† African palm,* and oranges* (2, 3, 7-11)
	Harvesting sugarcane* (8, 12, 13)
	Livestock breeding,*† cattle raising*† (2, 7, 8)
	Production of beef products*† and dairy products* (7)
	Collecting shellfish† (8, 9, 14)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Construction,† including transporting materials* (8, 15)
	Quarrying† of pumice, gypsum,* and limestone* (3, 8, 9, 14, 16)
	Production of gravel (crushed stones)† (17, 18)
	Mining† of gold (8, 9, 14)
Services	Domestic work (8, 19, 20)
	Work in transportation*† (2, 8)
	Street work, including vending† and performing at stoplights† (2-4, 19, 21-24)
	Garbage scavenging† (2, 19, 22, 25, 26)
	Work as couriers† (7, 9, 19)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1, 9, 19)
	Domestic work as a result of human trafficking* (27, 28)
	Use in the production of pornography* (29)

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

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

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




In Nicaragua, children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, particularly in Granada, Managua, the Caribbean Coast, and San Juan del Sur.(27, 30) It has been reported that children in Nicaragua who lack identification documents, sometimes because of a lack of birth registration, are at an increased risk of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.(8) An estimated 20 percent of children born in Nicaragua lack birth certificates.(31)

Education is free and compulsory in Nicaragua. However, costs associated with school supplies and transportation make it difficult for some children, in particular those from poor backgrounds and rural areas, including the Caribbean coastal region, to attend.(23, 32-34) Some sources indicate that secondary schools have not received adequate assistance and that secondary school attendance remains low, increasing the risk that older children engage in exploitative work.(3, 30, 34)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Nicaragua has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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	14	Article 131 of the Labor Code; Article 73 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 84 of the Constitution (35-38)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 130 and 133 of the Labor Code; Article 1 of Ministerial Agreement No. JCHG-08-06-10; Articles 2 and 74 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (35-37, 39)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Article 6 of the Ministerial Agreement No. JCHG-08-06-10; Article 133 of the Labor Code (35, 39)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 40 of the Constitution; Articles 61-63 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 182-183 and 315 of the Penal Code (38, 40, 41)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 61-63 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 182-183 and 315 of the Penal Code (40, 41)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 61 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 175-183 of the Penal Code; Articles 5 and 26 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (37, 40, 41)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 61 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 358-359 and 362 of the Penal Code; Article 71 of Law 285 (Reform to the Narcotics Law); Article 79 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (37, 40-42)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Annex 1 of the Code on the Organization, Jurisdiction, and Social Welfare of the Military (43)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	12	Article 121 of the Constitution; Articles 19 and 23 of the Education Law; Article 43 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (37, 38, 44)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 121 of the Constitution; Articles 8, 19, and 23 of the Education Law; Article 43 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (37, 38, 44)

* No conscription (38, 45)

The National Assembly approved the Law Against Trafficking in Persons – Nicaragua’s first anti-trafficking law – through a two-stage process in December 2014 and January 2015; it was enacted in February 2015.(41, 46) The law amends the Penal Code by raising penalties for the procurement of prostitution from 4 to 6 years’ imprisonment to 8 to 10 years; it also applies these penalties to an expanded set of criminal offenses that include benefitting commercially from and managing prostitution.(40, 41) These penalties are increased to 12 to 15 years’ imprisonment when the victim is a child or adolescent. The law also raises penalties for the trafficking of children and adolescents from 10 to 12 years’ imprisonment to 19 to 20 years.(40, 41) Additionally, the law specifies that exploitative child labor figures among an expanded set of criminal offences that may be prosecuted as human trafficking.(41)

Nicaraguan law is not clear regarding the age up to which education is compulsory. Article 121 of the Constitution states that primary school education is compulsory without specifying an age.(38) Under Articles 19 and 23 of the Education Law, education is compulsory only through the sixth grade, which it specifies is up to age 12 and the end of primary school.(44) Article 43 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code states that both primary and secondary school education are compulsory, suggesting up to age 17, but does not specifically state an age.(37) The lack of clarity regarding the age up to which education is compulsory and the potential gap between the compulsory education age and the minimum age for work may leave children vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms.(3, 47)

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).

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor (MITRAB)	Enforce labor laws and set child labor policy priorities.(19, 48) Conduct labor inspections through its General Labor Inspectorate, including child labor inspections through its Child Labor Inspections Unit. Conduct training on child labor issues and inspections, and coordinate with other public and private agencies.(9, 49, 50) Maintain a mailbox in each of Nicaragua’s 17 departments to receive complaints of child labor violations.(51)
Nicaraguan National Police (NNP)	Investigate cases of child labor and human trafficking through the Police Intelligence Unit, which detects crimes; the Special Crimes Unit, which investigates crimes; and 54 Women’s Commissions, which work on prevention and protection.(9, 19, 49) Maintain a hotline for receiving reports on the welfare of children, including those in danger of exploitation.(51)
Ministry of Governance	Coordinate participation between MITRAB and NNP in labor inspections in which employers resist inspection.(51)
Prosecutor General’s Office	Prosecute cases of child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. Contains 2 national-level and 35 department-level prosecutors that prosecute these and other crimes.(9, 19, 49)
Human Rights Attorney for Children	Assist in the enforcement of laws relating to child labor and hazardous child labor.(9, 19)
Ministry of the Family, Adolescence, and Childhood (MIFAN)	Maintain a hotline for receiving reports on human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.(51) Assist in providing officials with training on child labor violations.(31)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2015, labor law enforcement agencies in Nicaragua took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	\$1,000,000 (52)
Number of Labor Inspectors	97 (51)	98 (52)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (35)	Yes (35)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (51)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections	3,204 (51)	2,593 (52, 53)
■ Number Conducted at Worksite	3,204 (51)	2,593 (52, 53)
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	178 (51)	539 (52)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	0 (52)
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown	0 (52)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (54)
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Yes (54)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (51)	Yes (51, 52)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (51)	Yes (51, 52)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (51)	Yes (51, 52)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Unknown

In 2015, the overall budget for the Ministry of Labor (MITRAB) was approximately \$3 million, with approximately \$1 million allocated for the labor inspectorate.(52) NGO’s report that MITRAB’s budget is the third-lowest of all government ministries and that MITRAB lacks sufficient resources to adequately enforce child labor laws.(51, 52)

During the reporting period, MITRAB employed 98 labor inspectors whose responsibilities included investigating child labor violations. NGO’s report that the number of inspectors is insufficient to address the scope of the child labor problem in Nicaragua.(19) According to the ILO’s recommendation of one inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Nicaragua should employ roughly 199 inspectors in order to adequately enforce labor laws throughout the country.(55-57)

MITRAB reported conducting 1,321 inspections of worksites from January to November 2015.(52) Also during the reporting period, the Government conducted 1,272 inspections that focused on commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor that were preventative in nature.(53) Government officials and child labor experts have reported that child labor inspections throughout the country, and those in agricultural areas in particular, are limited due to resource and personnel constraints.(9, 19, 51) Complete information on the geographic distribution of labor inspections and the sectors in which they occurred was not publicly available.(51)

As a result of inspections, MITRAB reported 539 infractions of child labor laws.(52) Among these, 86 children were found working in hazardous conditions. MITRAB reported removing these children from hazardous work and referring them for services.(52) However, research could not determine whether a reciprocal referral mechanism exists between social service providers and labor authorities.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2015, criminal law enforcement agencies in Nicaragua took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Training for Investigators		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (53)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (46)	Yes (53)
Number of Investigations	17 (46)	10 (53)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	9 (46)	23 (54)
Number of Convictions	9 (46)	6 (54)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (46)	Yes (53)

The Government reported that criminal law enforcement officials received training on the new Law Against Trafficking in Persons, which went into effect on February 25, 2015.(53) The Government also reported conducting human trafficking prevention and awareness programs that reached 112,359 individuals. Participants included government criminal investigators, prosecutors, judges, and other law enforcement officials.(53) Research did not find the number of criminal investigators employed by the Nicaraguan National Police (NNP) or Prosecutor General’s Office during the reporting period.

The Government reported that as of February 2015, the Law Against Trafficking in Persons was the principal basis for all suspected human trafficking prosecutions and related convictions.(53) However, NGOs that work on human trafficking issues reported that the number of investigations was low compared with the scope of the problem.(53)

In 2015, the budget for the NNP and the Prosecutor General’s Office was not made publicly available. Reports from NGOs indicate that the NNP has insufficient resources, including a lack of personnel, equipment, vehicles, and funding, to carry out criminal investigations. NGO’s also report that the NNP’s Women’s Commissions are functionally inoperational.(31, 46, 54)

The Government and NGOs have reported that, according to a process developed by the National Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (CNCTP), victims of the worst forms of child labor are referred by the NNP to the Ministry of the Family, Adolescence, and Childhood (MIFAN), which then refers them to NGOs for services. Reports indicate that this method of referral has been successful.(46)

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

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Social Welfare System (SNBS)	Coordinate efforts on child labor and ensure that government institutions protect the rights of, and provide social services to, children and adolescents as part of its mandate to assist the Nicaraguan population. Comprises various government ministries, including MITRAB, MIFAN, the Ministry of Education (MINED), the Ministry of Health (MINSa), and the Ministry of Governance.(51)

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Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (cont)

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (CNCTP)	Coordinate efforts to address human trafficking for labor and commercial sexual exploitation, including the implementation of the Strategic Plan Against Trafficking in Persons. Led by the Ministry of Governance and comprising the NNP, Prosecutor General's Office, governmental ministries, the Supreme Court of Justice, and civil society organizations.(19, 41, 53, 58) Coordinate Nicaragua's participation in the Central American Regional Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons.(31)
Ministry of the Family, Adolescence, and Childhood (MIFAN)	Maintain a guide for the provision of assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation and coordinate between agencies responsible for their care.(30) Part of the SNBS.(51)

In 2015, the Government reported that the National Social Welfare System (SNBS) is the mechanism that coordinates efforts to address child labor.(51, 52) However, NGO reports indicate that the SNBS does not comprise a specific and consistent coordinating mechanism due to limited coordination among constituent ministries and a lack of resources dedicated to combating child labor.(51) Coordination between the SNBS and NGOs that address child labor is also limited. In addition, research did not find that the SNBS published information during the reporting period on its child labor coordination efforts or how it monitored the implementation of national policies, such as the Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor and the Protection of Young Workers (PEPETI).(52)

NGOs working on human trafficking issues reported that the CNCTP, as well as its regional working groups, were largely inactive following the enactment of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons in February 2015. Reports also indicate that the CNCTP did not appoint its Executive Secretariat, which is mandated by the Law Against Trafficking in Persons.(53)

While MIFAN maintains a guide for providing assistance to child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, reports indicate that the Government had no formal procedures for the identification of human trafficking victims among high-risk populations, including children who are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation.(30, 46) MIFAN appears to be responsible only for the care of child trafficking victims under age 13, and the extent of its coordinating role is unclear.(30, 58)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Nicaragua has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Roadmap for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Sets the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labor by 2016, and all forms of child labor by 2020.(51, 59, 60)
Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor and the Protection of Young Workers (PEPETI) (2007–2016)	Aims to eliminate child labor and ensure protections for adolescent workers. Seeks to reintegrate child laborers into the school system and increase school enrollment.(30)
National Human Development Plan (2012–2016)	Sets the Government's strategy for national development, including in poverty reduction, social well-being, and education. Includes efforts to eliminate child labor and uphold children's and adolescents' rights.(19, 61, 62)
National Plan of Youth Employment (2012–2016)	Seeks to eliminate child labor and protect the rights of working adolescents. Established by the National Commission of Youth Employment.(63–65)
Coffee Harvest Plan	Aims to develop a comprehensive approach to assist children whose parents work in the coffee harvest and to improve educational opportunities for children on coffee plantations. Focuses on eliminating hazardous child labor in the coffee sector in the Department of Jinotega. Developed by the Government, in collaboration with the private sector and civil society.(9, 19, 65, 66)
Plan of Integrated Attention	Prioritizes assistance for children and adolescents who work in stone quarries, mines, and in African palm cultivation. Involves coordination among several national ministries and local municipalities in order to determine the extent of child labor; create an action plan to uphold the rights of working children and adolescents to education, recreation, and health care; and promote better livelihoods for the families of working children and adolescents.(48, 64, 65)

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

Policy	Description
Inter-Ministerial Agreement on the Sustained Development of Children's Rights (2013)	Aims to make Nicaragua a country free from child labor, including hazardous child labor, through inter-ministerial cooperation channeled through the SNBS. Participating ministries agree to jointly create an action plan to address child labor and to generate dignified work for adolescents permitted to work.(67) Signed by MITRAB, MIFAN, MINED, the Presidents of the National Assembly and the Supreme Court, as well as by representatives from unions, the private sector, and NGOs.(67)
Policy on Special Protection for Children and Adolescents (Decreto No. 20-2006)	Focuses and consolidates the Government's guiding principles, objectives, and strategies on children's and adolescents' rights. Seeks to mainstream the recognition and defense of children's rights, including protections against child labor and commercial sexual exploitation, in policy areas such as social protection, development, and education.(68)
National Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons Strategic Plan (2014–2015)	Addresses human trafficking through directives shared by national and international public and private actors. Focuses on planning and monitoring efforts for awareness-raising, prevention, prosecution, and assistance for victims and their reintegration.(46)
Strategic Education Plan (PEE) (2011–2015)*	Articulates national educational strategies with development objectives that prioritize the building of human capital. Based on three core areas: (1) equality of access to free, universal education; (2) improved quality; and (3) increased institutional strength.(69, 70)
Declaration of the Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor (2014–2020)	Aims to increase regional cooperation on eradicating child labor by 2020 through signatories' efforts to strengthen monitoring and coordination mechanisms, government programs, and South-South exchanges. Reaffirms commitments made in the Brasilia Declaration from the Third Global Conference on Child Labor (October 2013), and signed by Nicaragua at the ILO's 18th Regional Meeting of the Americas in Lima, Peru (October 2014).(71-73)
Declaration of the Vice-Ministers of the XX Regional Conference on Migration†	Aims to strengthen regional cooperation in order to protect the human rights of migrants, especially youth and children, in countries of origin, transit, and destination, including by increasing opportunities for education and employment. Adopted by Nicaragua at the XX Regional Conference on Migration in Mexico City (November, 2015).(74-76)
XIX Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor†	Promotes decent work with social inclusion throughout the Americas. Held in Cancún, Mexico; participating countries adopted the Declaration of Cancún 2015 which aims in part to foster policies to eliminate labor exploitation, including child labor, and to promote education and vocational training for youth.(77, 78) Participating countries also adopted a Plan of Action that prioritizes the elimination of child labor, including through data collection, enforcement of labor laws, and the development of social protection policies for children and families.(77, 79)
Panama Declaration (2012)	Establishes commitments among Central American countries, Belize, and the Dominican Republic to implement country-based actions to eradicate the worst forms of child labor. MITRAB highlighted good practices and lessons learned from its child labor programs in coffee plantations and stone quarries.(80-85)

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

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

The Government's Roadmap for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor sets the goal of eliminating child labor in Nicaragua by 2020. However, research has not found a comprehensive action plan for its full implementation.(3, 86) The Government has developed a Strategic Plan to combat human trafficking through the CNCTP for 2014–2015.(46) However, research did not find information on this Strategic Plan publicly available, and the full extent of its implementation is unknown.(46, 53) NGOs working on human trafficking issues have reported that the Government lacks adequate resources to implement the victim care assistance procedures prescribed in the plan.(53)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Nicaragua funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Program Lovet (Programa Amor)	MIFAN program that targets 20,000 children, primarily in Managua, who are impoverished or involved in child labor, including in street vending and garbage scavenging. Provides education for children and vocational training for parents.(19, 48, 58, 87, 88) Overseen by Nicaragua's First Lady in coordination with the, MINED, MINSa, MITRAB, and the Ministry of Governance.(87) Includes children from birth to age 6 through "Program Love for the Smallest Ones".(19, 89) In 2015, the program reported reaching 18,415 children and adolescents through a range of initiatives, including by providing educational materials and tutoring to help children complete school.(52)

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Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor (cont)

Program	Description
First, I Learn (<i>Primero, Aprendo</i>)	Regional project supported by the European Union that promoted the eradication of child labor through access to education, among other avenues, in support of the Roadmap to Eliminate Child Labor.(90, 91) In Nicaragua, served children working in the agricultural sector in Jinotega.(92) Program ended in 2015.(52)
Educational Bridges (<i>Puentes Educativos</i>)†	MITRAB and MINED public-private partnership that provides education to children of coffee workers to prevent child labor during coffee harvests.(93-95) In 2015, the program continued to maintain and secure commitments from coffee farms to eliminate child labor in coffee production.(96)
Integral School Meal Program (<i>Merienda Escolar</i>)†	MIFAN and WFP initiative that provides more than 1 million children and adolescents meals at school to address poverty and bolster school attendance.(97, 98) Program is 70 percent funded by the Government of Nicaragua.(99) Plans to assist approximately 1.2 million children in 2016.(100)
National School Supply Program	MINED program to distribute packages of school supplies to preschool and primary school children in the poorest districts to increase attendance and completion rates. In 2014, program assisted 400,000 children.(101) In 2015, MINED expanded the program to provide 700,000 packages of school supplies to children from families in need. Program also provided 1.4 million textbooks to children in primary school, and 1.6 million textbooks to children in secondary school.(102)
La Chureca Project	\$50 million Government of Spain-funded project that closed La Chureca garbage dump in Managua in 2013 and opened a recycling plant in its place. Accomplishments include the creation of a school that keeps children out of child labor, construction of houses, and employment for 258 families who had worked scavenging in the garbage dump.(103-106) In 2015, continued to assist beneficiaries.(107)
Birth Registration Campaign (<i>Derecho a un Nombre</i>)	Government initiative, in coordination with Save the Children and UNICEF, to advance birth registration campaigns.(31, 60, 108)
Pro-Child Program (<i>Proniño</i>)	MINED and Telefónica Foundation public-private partnership that increases educational opportunities for children to reduce and prevent child labor in line with ILO goals to eradicate the worst forms of child labor by 2020. Implemented with the assistance of local NGOs, assists children, families, and schools by helping to strengthen curricula and by working to support families' commitments to ensure children attend school.(109-111)
Elimination of Child Labor in Latin America (Phase 4) (2011–2015)	\$4.5 million Government of Spain-funded, 4-year project implemented by ILO-IPEC to combat child labor in 19 countries, including Nicaragua.(112)
Education and Monitoring Program for the Eradication of Child Labor (2012–2015)	\$1.3 million Government of Spain-funded, 2-year project implemented by ILO-IPEC that aims to strengthen public policies and government capacity to combat child labor in 19 countries in Latin America, including Nicaragua. Includes the objective of developing information systems on the worst forms of child labor.(112)

† Program is funded by the Government of Nicaragua.

The scope of current social programs does not appear to be sufficient to assist children who are trafficked or engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation.(19) While the Government provides medical, educational, and legal assistance to trafficking victims, international organizations and NGOs provide their shelter, food, clothing, and psychological assistance.(9, 46, 113) NGOs indicate that the regions most affected by human trafficking lack adequate care facilities, and that victims of the worst forms of child labor in these areas are referred to NGO shelters in Managua.(46)

NGOs also indicate that Program Love lacks overall effectiveness and transparency.(7, 9, 19) For example, while the Government reported that Program Love assisted 18,415 children and adolescents during the reporting period, information on the kind of assistance provided to beneficiaries, including on whether beneficiaries were engaged in child labor, was not publicly available.(51, 52)

Although the Government's birth registration campaign is advancing, it does not reach all children, especially in remote areas, and many children lack the documentation needed to access basic services.(108, 114-116) In an effort to promote birth registrations, Nicaragua's new Family Code, which was passed in 2014 and went into effect in 2015, provides for free birth registrations up to age 7.(60, 117)

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 Nicaragua (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law is consistent and provides a compulsory education age that is not less than the minimum age for work.	2014 – 2015
Enforcement	Publicly report on the training provided to labor inspectors on child labor, including its worst forms.	2015
	Dedicate more human and financial resources, such as by hiring and retaining more labor inspectors, to the enforcement of child labor laws, in particular in agriculture.	2009 – 2015
	Publicly report on the geographic distribution of labor inspections and on the sectors in which inspections occur.	2014 – 2015
	Ensure that penalties are imposed and fines are collected for child labor violations.	2015
	Ensure a reciprocal referral mechanism exists between labor authorities and social services, and make information on the number of children referred between agencies publicly available.	2015
	Publicly report on the number of criminal investigators employed to investigate the worst forms of child labor and ensure they have adequate training and resources to conduct their investigations.	2014 – 2015
	Ensure the number of criminal investigations for the worst forms of child labor, including for human trafficking violations, is adequate to address the scope of the problem.	2015
	Publicly report on the number of criminal violations found through investigations for the worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2015
Coordination	Clarify the roles of SNBS ministries in addressing child labor; increase their collaboration and resources to ensure the Government has a specific and consistent mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor, including with NGOs; and publicly report on its efforts.	2014 – 2015
	Ensure the National Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons meets regularly to coordinate government activities on human trafficking issues, and ensure it establishes its Executive Secretariat as mandated by the Law Against Trafficking in Persons.	2015
	Enhance coordination and information sharing among actors involved in child labor issues and in efforts to identify and refer victims of child trafficking.	2009 – 2015
Government Policies	Finalize and begin implementing a concrete action plan to achieve the objective of eliminating child labor by 2020.	2009 – 2015
	Make publicly available national plans that address human trafficking and publicly report on their implementation.	2014 – 2015
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Strategic Education Plan.	2014 – 2015
Social Programs	Develop strategies and devote resources to improve attendance in secondary school education.	2009 – 2015
	Expand programs to address the worst forms of child labor to more sectors in which exploitative child labor exists, such as commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2015
	Dedicate greater resources to expand services that assist child trafficking victims.	2010 – 2015
	Assess the effectiveness of Program Love in reducing the worst forms of child labor and publicize its results in order to inform future efforts.	2010 – 2015
	Expand birth registration programs, in particular in remote areas, to ensure that children have access to basic services.	2009 – 2015

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