

In 2015, Mauritius made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government announced a new plan for poverty alleviation, hired additional labor inspectors, and increased funding for several programs to combat child labor and assist vulnerable households. However, children in Mauritius are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. Limited resources for the systematic enforcement of criminal child labor laws impede government efforts to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. In addition, poor coordination continues to hinder the Government's efforts to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Agalega Islands, Cargados Carajos Shoals, and Rodrigues are not shown.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritius are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.(1-4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritius. 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.	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		97.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2014, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(5)
Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2015.(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	Producing* and harvesting* vegetables* (3, 4, 7-9)
	Feeding livestock* (9)
	Fishing,* including diving,* and casting nets* and traps* (3, 7, 10)
Industry	Working in factories* and masonry* (3, 7)
Services	Domestic work (3, 4, 7)
	Working in apparel shops* (7)
	Street work, including vending,* begging,* and carrying* goods in public markets (4, 7, 8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (1-4, 8, 11)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs* (3, 7)

* 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.

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Children in Mauritius are lured into commercial sexual exploitation by their peers, family members, or through false offers of other employment; however, the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, Employment, and Training (MOLIRE) states that there is no child labor in the formal sector.(2, 3) Mauritius has never conducted a national child labor survey, and therefore information is limited about the prevalence of child labor in the country.(12)

Evidence suggests that incidents of physical and psychological abuse, including corporal punishment of students by teachers, prevent some children from attending school, which increases their risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation.(4, 11, 13-15) Because of discrimination, children with disabilities face serious barriers to access education.(4, 15, 16)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Mauritius 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	16	Section 6 of the Employment Rights Act (17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 12 of the Employment Rights Act (17)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Section 8 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (18)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 6 of the Constitution; Article 2 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (19, 20)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 11 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 13A of the Child Protection Act (20, 21)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 14 of the Child Protection Act; Article 253 of the Criminal Code (21, 22)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 30.1b–e, 38a, 41.1f, and 41.2 of the Dangerous Drugs Act (23)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	N/A†		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 37.2 of the Education Act (24)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 35 of the Education Act (24)

* No conscription (25)

† No standing military (25)

The Government of Mauritius continues to work on a comprehensive bill designed to harmonize the existing legal framework related to children's rights and ensure that it is consistent with the CEACR.(4, 26-28) Research, however, was unable to determine the timeline of its introduction to the National Assembly for consideration.(3)

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
Inspection and Enforcement Division of the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, Employment, and Training (MOLIRE)	Enforce all labor laws, including those related to child labor.(29, 30)
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Investigate any suspected or reported case of child labor or violation of a child's rights. Promote compliance with the CRC.(11, 31)
Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Minors' Brigade)	Investigate reports of child or forced labor, sometimes in conjunction with routine police patrols.(1, 11, 28) Patrol arcades, bus terminals, and other areas in which youth are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.(1, 29) Maintain a database of all trafficking incidents of children and refer all cases of commercial sexual exploitation to the Child Development Unit (CDU).(26)
Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MOGE) Child Development Unit (CDU)	Enforce legislation related to children and implement policies and programs related to child development.(11, 28, 32) Receive tips on all forms of child abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.(2, 29) Provide follow-up assistance to victims.(1, 11) Assign child welfare officers to accompany victims while they receive immediate medical care, and work in conjunction with the police if an official statement is needed.(2) Develop a central database and standard operating procedures for sharing information and taking action to address child labor.(26, 33)

In 2015, the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MOGE) carried out three awareness campaigns on children's rights and how to safeguard them and formed a committee to investigate complaints of poor conditions in residential care centers.(3) The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children appointed a new ombudsperson experienced in working with vulnerable children and advocating for children's rights.(3, 34)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2015, labor law enforcement agencies in Mauritius 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	\$885,000 (3)	\$1.1 million (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	45 (9)	55 (3)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown	No (3)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (3)
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (3)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections	860 (9, 34)	479‡ (3)
■ Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	479‡ (3)
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	0
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (9)	2 (3, 12)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	0 (3)
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (3)
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	No (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Unknown	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (3)

‡ Data are from January 1, 2015, to October 31, 2015.(34)

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Although the MOLIRE works with the CDU and the Minors' Brigade to refer victims to social service providers, research indicates that the MOLIRE does not coordinate with the Ministry of Education to ensure that victims have access to education.(3, 9, 35) During the reporting period, the police initiated investigations into two cases of child labor related to violations of the labor code, which are still ongoing.(35)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research found no information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritius 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 (9)	Unknown
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (9)	Unknown
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11, 28)	Yes (3)

The Minors' Brigade, in cooperation with the CDU, manages the "119" and "113" hotlines to receive complaints about situations requiring child protection; however, it is not known how many cases of child labor were identified as a result of calls made to these hotlines.(11, 28)

Research revealed that criminal law enforcement agencies lacked staff, transportation, and other necessities to properly enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor.(2, 26, 36)

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 Child Protection Committee (NCPC)	Coordinate, monitor, and evaluate activities on children's rights and welfare, including efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by MOGE and comprising representatives from more than 10 government Ministries.(11) Also known as the Working Together Committee and includes a subcommittee that coordinates efforts to combat commercial sexual exploitation.(33, 37).
National Children's Council (NCC)	Serve as the executive of child protection programs and focuses on child protection issues in the country as an independent, paragonmental entity under the auspices of MOGE.(1, 11)

In 2015, a lack of coordination hindered the Government's efforts to address child labor and significant overlap continues to exist among the committees involved in child protection issues.(3, 11) The roles of the National Child Protection Committee (NCPC) and the National Children's Council (NCC) are unclear in coordinating efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor.(11) In November 2015, the NCC participated in a month-long awareness-raising campaign on children's rights in honor of Universal Children's Day.(3) The NCPC met once during the reporting period.(12)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Child Safety Online Action Plan	Prevents sexual exploitation of children on the Internet by strengthening the legal framework and raising awareness among parents and children.(38) Falls under the direction of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, and implemented in conjunction with other government agencies, including MOGE; the Minors' Brigade; the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children; and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources.(11, 29) In 2015, as part of the Plan, the National Computer Board carried out several awareness-raising campaigns related to Internet safety for children, students, parents, and educators.(3)
National Policy Paper on the Family (2006–2015)*	Supports child welfare through holistic support for families, including job training for parents; led by MOGE.(11, 39)
Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan (2008–2020)*	Aims to improve equity of access to primary, secondary, and technical and vocational education, and to provide social services for youth. Overseen by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources.(40, 41)
UNDP Country Program for Mauritius (2013–2016)*	Improves access to education for vulnerable children by reducing inequality.(42)
Government Development Program—Achieving Meaningful Change (2015–2019)*†	Describes the overall development agenda. Aims to increase access to social protection services for vulnerable populations, including children.(27, 43, 44)
Marshall Plan Against Poverty for Mauritius*†	Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment policy addresses access to education, community development, and employment for vulnerable groups.(33) Receives technical assistance from UNDP.(3)

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

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Mauritius funded 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
Awareness-raising Programs in Schools, Community Centers, and in the Media on Commercial Sexual Exploitation†	Government program to educate the public on preventing sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children.(1, 2, 37) During 2015, educated 1,952 students on commercial sexual exploitation of children.(28)
Workshops on Commercial Sexual Exploitation†	Government workshops that aim to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of vulnerable groups.(1)
Drop-in Centers†	Government program that provides counseling and referrals to victims of sexual abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Monitored by the CDU.(26, 28, 30)
Shelters and Institutional Care†	Government program that provides shelter and institutional care to victims who are referred to Government or NGO shelters. Through residential care centers, serve victims of child abuse, including victims of sexual abuse and prostitution.(3, 11, 28) In 2015, operated 21 shelters and served 567 children.(1, 28, 30)
Community Child Protection Program†	Government program that provides child protection services to at-risk youth in nine districts.(28)
Income Support Program†	Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions program that provides money directly to 8,000 vulnerable families living below the Poverty Intervention Line.(32, 33)
Special Collaborative Program for Support to Women and Children in Distress†	MOGE program that provides funding to NGOs to implement programs to improve the lives of vulnerable women and children and reintegrate them into mainstream society.(34) Received \$1.2 million from the Government from January 2015 to June 2016, a significant increase from the \$484,000 received from January to December 2014.(34, 35)
Social Aid Program†	Government program that provides assistance to 20,000 families.(11, 32)
Eradication of Absolute Poverty Program†	Government program that aims to increase poor children's access to education by expanding free public school education and providing school feeding support to more than 7,500 households in 229 geographic pockets of poverty.(41)

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

Program	Description
Education Priority Zones (ZEP)†	Government program that combats social inequalities by providing equal opportunities to all primary school children throughout the country. Has been shown to reduce school dropout rates through enhanced community participation in education.(11, 41) In 2015, received Government funding for low-performing schools.(3)
Child Mentoring Schemet	Government program that provides one-on-one counseling to at-risk children through a government-selected mentor.(37, 45)
Summer and Winter School Program†	Government program that provides summer and winter schooling to enhance the successful transition of students from primary to secondary school.(29, 37)
Second Chance Program†	Government program to educate and provide vocational training and life skills to those who dropped out after age 16.(37)

† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.

The Government's institutional care facilities, which house orphans, victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and victims of other types of abuses, are overcrowded and lack appropriate standards of care, leading to inadequate service provision.(1, 3, 35) Service providers are overtaxed and lack appropriate training.(3) Child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are sometimes placed by court order into probation centers, where they may not receive appropriate treatment.(1)

In addition, the Government of Mauritius does not fund or participate in programs to address child labor in domestic work or street work.

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 Mauritius (Table 11).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by authorizing inspectors to assess penalties and conduct targeted routine inspections.	2015
	Establish a mechanism to log all calls to the child protection hotline and track cases of child labor for referral to law enforcement or social service providers.	2014 – 2015
	Increase the amount of training, human resources, and funding for agencies responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor.	2011 – 2015
Coordination	Streamline coordination across agencies and encourage effective coordination between the NCCP and the NCC.	2012 – 2015
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing policies.	2010 – 2015
	Adopt a policy that addresses the worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation.	2014 – 2015
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the prevalence of child labor in Mauritius to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2015
	Ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, can attend school without fear of physical or psychological abuse.	2014 – 2015
	Ensure that victims of commercial sexual exploitation have access to comprehensive, quality services and refrain from placing victims in facilities designed for youth on probation.	2010 – 2015
	Expand the scope of programs to address the worst forms of child labor, including in domestic work and street work.	2014 – 2015

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- the last grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical entrance age to the last grade of primary. A high ratio indicates a high degree of current primary education completion. Because the calculation includes all new entrants to last grade (regardless of age), the ratio can exceed 100 percent, due to over-aged and under-aged children who enter primary school late/early and/or repeat grades. For more information, please see the “Children’s Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section of this report.
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