

In 2017, Uganda made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Police officers conducted 29 investigations of the worst forms of child labor. The government, in partnership with a local bank, contributed approximately \$9 million to a program that aims to reduce youth unemployment through enterprise development, job creation, and business skills training. However, children in Uganda engage in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation. Children also perform dangerous tasks in gold mining. Inadequate funding, training, and resources hampered the capacity of law enforcement agencies to conduct child labor inspections and investigations. Gaps in the legal framework persist, including contradicting laws regulating the minimum age for employment. In addition, existing programs are inadequate to address child labor in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Uganda engage in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation. (1; 2; 3) Children also perform dangerous tasks in gold mining. (4; 5; 6; 7) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Uganda.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	30.9 (3,034,126)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	88.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	34.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		52.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (8)

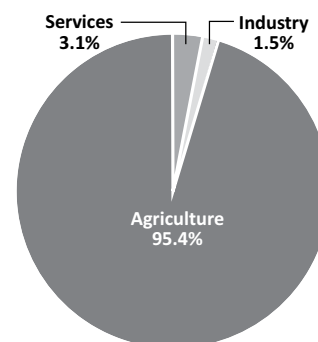
Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey, 2011–12. (9)

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	Cultivating and harvesting cocoa, coffee, corn, tea,† tobacco,† rice,† sugarcane,† and vanilla, and acting as scarecrows in rice fields (10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17)
	Working with livestock, including herding cattle (12; 17)
	Fishing,† including catching, smoking, and selling fish, and paddling† and loading boats† (4; 10; 12; 18)
	Producing charcoal (12)
Industry	Construction, including making and laying bricks (10; 17)
	Quarrying stone† and mining gold, sand,† and salt (4; 10; 12; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 5)
	Manufacturing, including in steel rolling mills and carpentry workshops (12)
Services	Domestic work (25; 4; 2; 1; 26; 17)
	Street work, including vending,† begging,† car washing, working as porters,† scavenging,† and collecting and selling scrap metal (2; 1; 10; 12; 27; 28; 29; 30)
	Working in hotels,† restaurants,† bars,† and video halls† (1; 10; 12; 27; 17)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Collecting firewood for sale (31)
	Producing alcoholic beverages (32)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2; 1; 27; 3)
	Forced labor in agriculture, fishing, cattle herding, bars and restaurants, begging, brick making, mining, stone quarrying, street vending, and domestic work, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (33; 34; 3; 30; 32)
	Use in the production of pornography (35)
	Use in illicit activities, including smuggling, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1; 12; 29)

† 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.




Children from the Karamoja region are trafficked and willingly migrate to Kampala and other urban centers where they engage in begging, street vending, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation. (2; 29; 30; 3) Children from neighboring countries are exploited in forced agricultural labor and commercial sexual exploitation in Uganda. (3) During the reporting period, child trafficking victims from the Busoga sub-region in Uganda were used in armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (36)

Although the law provides for free compulsory education, the cost of school supplies, uniforms, and other materials often prohibits children from attending school. (4; 37; 38; 39; 7) Furthermore, research found that children experience physical and sexual abuse at school by teachers and classmates. (35; 39)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Uganda has ratified most 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 (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Uganda’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act (40)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act; Sections 32(4) and 32(5) of the Employment Act; Regulation 5 of the Employment (Employment of Children) Regulations (40; 41; 42)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Regulation 6 and the First Schedule of the Employment (Employment of Children) Regulations; Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act (42; 40)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 5 of the Employment Act; Sections 3–5 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (41; 43)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 3–5 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (43)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 8 of the Children (Amendment) Act; Sections 3–5 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 131, 136–137, and 139 of the Penal Code; Section 14 of the Anti-Pornography Act (40; 43; 44; 45)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 5(d) of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (43)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 52(2)(c) of the Defense Forces Act (46)
Non-state	Yes	18	Section 5(b) of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (43)
Compulsory Education Age	No	13‡	Section 10(3)(a) of the Education Act (37)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 10(3)(a) of the Education Act (37)

* No conscription (46)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (37)

In 2016, the government approved the Children (Amendment) Act, which establishes age 16 as the minimum age for work and criminalizes the use of a child for commercial sexual exploitation. (40) The government is developing regulations to implement the Act. (47) The law's minimum age protections do not apply to children working without a formal employment relationship. (41)

Although Uganda has a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children under 18, section 8 of the Employment of Children Regulations permits a Commissioner to allow children age 12 and older enrolled in an educational training or apprenticeship program to engage in hazardous work, in violation of international standards. (42)

Children in Uganda are required to attend school only up to age 13. This standard makes children ages 13 to 15 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. (37)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD)	Enforce labor laws throughout the country. (31) The Industrial Court makes judgments on labor dispute cases, which are referred to the court by labor officers. (12)
Ministry of Internal Affairs	Enforce criminal laws on the worst forms of child labor. (48) The Uganda Police Force's Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) investigates forced labor cases, the Special Investigations Division and the Anti-Human Trafficking Desk investigate cases related to human trafficking and the use of children in illicit activities, and the Sexual Offenses Desk investigates commercial sexual exploitation. (12) Liaison officers handle child labor complaints and overall child protection issues at police posts that do not have a CFPU officer. (48) The Immigration Department assists in identifying potential human trafficking victims. (49)
Ministry of Local Government	Oversee district labor officers who refer cases to the Industrial Court. (12) Deploy community development officers at the district level when district labor officers are not available. (31)
Directorate of Public Prosecutions	Prosecute criminal cases related to the worst forms of child labor that are referred by the Uganda Police Force. (50)

Research found that coordination among the various agencies responsible for child labor law enforcement remains an issue because labor officers are under the district governments' authority instead of the MGLSD's. (47; 51) The Industrial Court, however, is

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advocating for the MGLSD to supervise district labor officers with the hope that it will increase the number of child labor case referrals. (12) Research found that the Industrial Court has not heard any child labor cases since its inception. (51)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Uganda took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the MGLSD that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including penalty assessment authorization.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$170,000 (35)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	53 (35)	47 (32)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (32)	No (32)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (35)	Yes (32)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (35)	Yes (32)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (35)	Yes (32)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	220 (35)	Unknown
Number Conducted at Worksites	100 (35)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (35)	Yes (32)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Yes (32)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (35)	Yes (32)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (35)	Yes (32)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (35)	Yes (32)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (35)	Yes (32)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Uganda's workforce, which includes more than 20 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed countries, Uganda would employ about 500 inspectors. (52; 53; 54) Enforcement of child labor laws remains challenging due to the lack of resources for inspections. (32)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Uganda took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	No (32)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (36)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (55)	Yes (56)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	29 (36)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	100 (36)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	9 (3)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	6 (3)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (35)	Yes (32)

According to the government, there is not a sufficient number of criminal law enforcement officials responsible for investigating child labor. (12) Training is insufficient; some criminal law enforcement officials were not aware of key human trafficking laws, and some police officers did not understand the evidence needed to prosecute child labor cases. (3; 32) Of the 29 investigations conducted by police officials in 2017, 23 were investigations of domestic trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation, 4 were of international trafficking for labor exploitation, and 2 were of international trafficking for use in armed conflict. (36) Of the 100 violations found in 2017, among the domestic child trafficking victims, 77 experienced labor exploitation and 2 experienced sexual exploitation. Among the international child trafficking victims, 16 were used in armed conflict and 5 were exploited for labor. (36) The Ministry of Internal Affairs initiated 45 prosecutions and achieved 17 convictions for trafficking in persons; however, these data are not disaggregated by victims' age or exploitation, so information about the number of prosecutions initiated and convictions achieved for the worst forms of child labor is not available. (36) During the reporting period, the government removed 81 children from child labor and reintegrated children with their families or provided access to an alternative caregiver. (32)

Research found that street children, including potential human trafficking victims, are sometimes detained by police. (1; 3; 57) According to the government, police officers send street children to homes and shelters and do not keep them in detention facilities; however, some children may have been housed in juvenile rehabilitation centers as shelters are frequently full. Police intermittently rounded up street children, housed them in children's homes and shelters for several days while social workers completed background checks and family tracing, and then returned them to their families. (57) Some children from the Karamoja region were enrolled in a youth training center in Karamoja, where they were provided with counseling and vocational training before they were returned to their families. (50; 57)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labor	Coordinate child labor issues and implement the National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Led by MGLSD and includes members from several ministries, trade unions, development organizations, civil society, and media agencies. (58)
Stop Child Labor Partners Forum	Coordinate, monitor, and evaluate child labor-related programs and policies in Uganda. Led by the National Council for Children, with representatives from several ministries, CFPU, and civil society groups. (58)
Anti-Human Trafficking National Taskforce	Coordinate government efforts on human trafficking. Led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, includes 30 members from government agencies and civil society. (58; 59)
National Child Protection Working Group	Monitor the quality of services provided to orphans and vulnerable children. Led by MGLSD, includes members from five government agencies and civil society organizations. (12)
National Council for Children's Inter-Ministerial Coordination Mechanism	Work to ensure that member organizations integrate child labor concerns into their policies and budgets. Members include 10 government agencies. (12)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor[‡]

Policy	Description
National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2012/2013–2016/2017)	Aims to reduce the worst forms of child labor in Uganda by 2017. (60) In 2017, the government continued to review the Plan and began working with civil society to develop a new plan, which is expected to be approved in 2018. (32; 51)
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2013–2018)	Guides the government's efforts to combat human trafficking. (61)
National Social Protection Policy	Aims to reduce poverty and socioeconomic inequalities for inclusive development by targeting vulnerable people, including child laborers. (62)
National Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda (2015–2019)	Promotes girls' education and identifies child labor, particularly domestic work, as a key barrier to girls' access to education. (63)

[‡] The Government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (64; 65)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor†‡

Program	Description
USDOL-Funded Projects	Country-Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor Project (CLEAR) (2013–2018), implemented by the ILO in 11 countries to build local and national capacity of the government to address child labor; and African Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI) (2013–2018), \$3.3 million project implemented by World Education, Inc. (66; 67) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Decent Work Country Program (2013–2017)	ILO-implemented program that outlined strategies for promoting decent work in Uganda. Priorities included youth employment and improved social protection for both formal and informal workers; also included a focus on the prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labor. (68)
Combating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing (2015–2018)	Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing Foundation-funded program implemented by the ILO that improves the capacity of the government and social partners to develop and implement policies to combat child labor in agriculture. (69; 70)
Realizing Livelihood Improvement Through Savings and Education	NGO-implemented program in partnership with the government that provides technical assistance and capacity building to the MGLSD and the National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labor. (35) The program was extended through 2018. (32)
Youth Venture Capital Fund†	Government program that aims to reduce youth unemployment through enterprise development, job creation, and business skills training. (12) In 2017, the government, in partnership with a local bank, contributed approximately \$9 million for fiscal year 2017/2018. (32)

† Program is funded by the Government of Uganda.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (71; 72; 73)

Although Uganda has programs that address child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Uganda (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2017
	Ensure that only minors age 16 and older who have received adequate, specific instruction or vocational training are permitted to perform hazardous work, and that their health, safety, and morals are fully protected.	2017
	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children who do not work under a formal employment relationship.	2016 – 2017
	Ensure that the law requires free, compulsory education up to age 16 so that it is commensurate with the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2017
Enforcement	Ensure coordination between the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development and the Ministry of Local Government so that labor dispute cases are referred to the Industrial Court, and ensure that the Industrial Court hears child labor cases.	2015 – 2017
	Publish information on the Labor Inspectorate’s funding, number and type of labor inspections conducted, number of child labor violations found, number of child labor penalties imposed, and number of penalties collected.	2013 – 2017
	Publish disaggregated data on the prosecutions initiated and convictions achieved for the worst forms of child labor.	2017
	Authorize the Inspectorate to assess penalties.	2017
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO’s technical advice.	2009 – 2017
	Ensure sufficient funding, training, and resources for law enforcement agencies so that child labor inspections and investigations can be properly conducted.	2013 – 2017

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen mechanisms for referring street children, including potential human trafficking victims, to social services providers, and prevent these children from being detained.	2015 – 2017
Social Programs	Ensure that all children are able to attend school regardless of their ability to purchase school materials. Ensure that students are protected from physical and sexual abuse by teachers and classmates.	2012 – 2017
	Ensure the availability of shelters for victims of child labor, including child trafficking victims.	2017
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, particularly in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2017

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