

In 2014, Vanuatu made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government continued implementing the National Minimum Standards in Education, a key component of which is child protection. However, limited evidence suggests that children are engaged in child labor in agriculture and in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation. The law does not establish a minimum age for hazardous work and the law does not prohibit hazardous occupations and activities for children. A mechanism to coordinate government efforts to combat child labor has not been established. Vanuatu does not have any social programs to address child labor, including its worst forms.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Vanuatu are engaged in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation.(1) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Vanuatu. 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 (%)		83.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(2)
Data were unavailable from Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis, 2015.(3)

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	Activities unknown* (4, 5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation* (1, 5, 6)

* 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.

There have been no national surveys of child labor in Vanuatu to determine the nature and prevalence of the problem.(7) By tradition, children in Vanuatu are expected to assist with agricultural production from a young age.(5)

The Vanuatu Education Road Map establishes a policy to make primary education, grades one to six, free to all children by 2015. (8) However, school fees and lack of physical access to schools continue to be significant barriers to education.(7, 9-11)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Vanuatu 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	✓

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor (cont)

	Convention	Ratification
	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	15	Section 40 of the Employment Act (12)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 7 of the Employment Act, Section 102 of the Penal Code (12, 13)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 102 of the Penal Code (13)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 101B, 101D, and 147B of the Penal Code (13)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	N/A†		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

† No standing military (14)

While the minimum age for employment is 15, the law permits children ages 12 through 14 to perform light domestic or agricultural work on third-party farms, if they are employed with a family member. The Employment Act does not define what constitutes “light work.”(12) The Government has neither established a minimum age for hazardous work nor prohibited hazardous occupations and/or activities for children.(12)

Information was not available on whether there are laws that regulate the use of children in illicit activities, such as drug trafficking; however, incitement of another person to any criminal offense is prohibited by the Penal Code.(13)

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
Labor Department	Enforce provisions set forth in the Employment Act, including child labor laws.(15)
Vanuatu Police Force	Enforce all criminal laws, including those regarding human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children.(5)

Research did not find evidence that law enforcement agencies in Vanuatu took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

Based on the most recent information available, four inspectors within the Labor Department are responsible for child labor cases. Labor inspector training on the topic of child labor is limited to informal presentations.(1) Information is not available on the number of labor inspections, violations of child labor laws, or citations and/or penalties issued during the reporting period.(16) Research did not find whether a referral mechanism exists between the Labor Department and the Vanuatu Police Force, or between the Labor Department and social protection and rehabilitation services.

Criminal Law Enforcement

Based on the most recent data available, the Vanuatu Police Force employs 50 investigators, who are responsible for enforcing laws against the worst forms of child labor.(5) Information is not available on the training of investigators or on the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of crimes related to the worst forms of child labor.(7) Research did not find whether a referral mechanism exists between the Vanuatu Police Force and a social welfare program that can provide protection and rehabilitation for children involved in the worst forms of child labor.

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

Although a committee exists to improve the well-being of children, research found no evidence that the committee functions as a coordinating mechanism to address child labor, including all its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Children's Committee	Coordinate Government efforts to improve children's well-being, including eliminating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Monitor child protection issues and create a comprehensive and integrated agenda for children's rights.(7, 17)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Vanuatu has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
UNDAF for the Pacific Region (2013–2017)*	Promotes sustainable development and economic growth for vulnerable groups in 14 Pacific Island Countries and Territories: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.(18) Includes initiatives to prevent and respond to abuse and exploitation of children in Vanuatu.(19)
Vanuatu Education Road Map*	Establishes a comprehensive strategic direction for the country's education sector and specifically supports the goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. Includes three strategic goals: (1) to increase equal access to education, which includes increasing government grants and phasing out parental contributions; (2) to improve the quality of education; and (3) to improve management of the education system.(8)
Vanuatu Minimum Quality Standards for Primary Schools*	Includes a requirement that all primary schools develop and implement Safe School Policies that cover child protection and emergency preparedness.(20)

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

Although the Government of Vanuatu has policies related to child labor, research found no evidence of a policy addressing child labor, including its worst forms.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence of programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms.

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 Vanuatu (Table 8).

Table 8. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014
	Set the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 and ensure that the law prohibits hazardous occupations and/or activities for children.	2009 – 2014
	Ensure that the law protects children under age 15 employed in light domestic or agricultural work.	2009 – 2014
	Ensure that the law establishes a compulsory age for education that is equal to or older than the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2014
Enforcement	Train labor inspectors on enforcing child labor laws and train criminal investigators on enforcing laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor.	2014
	Publish data on the number of labor inspections, violations of child labor laws, and citations and/or penalties. Publish data on the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of crimes related to the worst forms of child labor.	2012 – 2014
	Establish referral mechanisms among the Labor Department, the Vanuatu Police Force, and social welfare services to protect and rehabilitate children involved in child labor, including its worst forms.	2014
Coordination	Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat child labor, including its worst forms.	2012 – 2014
Government Policies	Explore ways to increase access to schooling and fully implement the policy of free, universal education.	2012 – 2014
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention into existing education and child protection policies.	2012 – 2014
	Establish a policy to address child labor, including its worst forms.	2014
Social Programs	Conduct a national child labor survey to determine the prevalence and nature of child labor in Vanuatu.	2014
	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor, specifically commercial sexual exploitation.	2012 – 2014

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