

In 2012, Vanuatu made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the Government began implementing a policy to mandate National Minimum Standards in Education, a key component of which is child protection. Vanuatu also continued participating in the ILO Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) and the Pacific Policy, Advocacy, Planning, and Evaluation Program (PAPE). However, the Government lacks a complete preventive legal framework; Vanuatu has not established a minimum age for hazardous work or developed a list of hazardous activities prohibited to children. Vanuatu has not established a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor and does not implement programs to combat the problem. Children engage in the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and are found in commercial sexual exploitation.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate		83.4

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2013.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Vanuatu engage in the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and are found in commercial sexual exploitation. Many children engage in agricultural work.(3, 4) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(5, 6) There are reports that some children engage in commercial sexual exploitation.(4, 7)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Employment Act establishes the minimum age for employment at 15. It permits children under age 12 to perform light work on farms owned and managed by a family member, although it does not define what constitutes "light work."(8)



Children ages 12 through 14 may perform light domestic or agricultural work if a family member is employed with the child. Agricultural work is also permitted for children between the ages of 12 and 14 if it is done collectively by the community.(8) The Act prohibits children under age 18 from working on ships; however, with the permission of a labor officer, a child at age 15 is allowed to work on a ship.(8) The Act also prohibits children younger than 16 from working at night and provides restrictions on night work for children between ages 16 and 18. The Government has not established a minimum age for hazardous work, nor does it have a list of hazardous activities or occupations prohibited to children.(8)

The Penal Code prohibits the use, procurement, or sale of a child for prostitution.(9) It also prohibits the use, procurement, or offering of a child for the production of pornography.(9) Together, the Employment Act and the Penal Code prohibit slavery, forced or compulsory labor, and trafficking.(8, 9)

Information was not available on whether there are laws that regulate the use of children in illicit activities such as drug trafficking.

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International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	C138, Minimum Age	No
	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	No
	Minimum Age for Work	15
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No
	Compulsory Education Age	No
	Free Public Education	Yes

Through the DWCP, the Labor Department has requested financial assistance from the ILO to prepare new regulations on child labor and to translate the revised Employment Relations Bill into local languages.(10) The Government has also made labor law reform a key priority, and has drafted the new legislation to replace the current Employment Act.(11) No information on the progress of these efforts was available at the time of reporting.

Vanuatu has no national army, therefore there is no military conscription.(12)

The Education Act establishes that for children between ages 6 and 14, it is “the duty of the child’s parents to ensure that the child attends a school.”(13) However, education is not compulsory at any age.(4, 14)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Research found no evidence that the Government of Vanuatu has established a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.

The National Children’s Committee (NCC) is charged with coordinating Government efforts to improve children’s

well-being, including eliminating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The NCC is also responsible for monitoring child protection issues and for creating a comprehensive and integrated agenda for children’s rights.(15, 16) The Government has also formed a National Child Protection Working Group, which builds community-based child protection systems for prevention, promotion, and response.(17)

The Government participates in the Tripartite Labor Advisory Council, which also includes workers and employers. The Council has an official mandate to provide recommendations and proposals for government policies on employment and labor issues.(18)

The Labor Department is the primary federal agency responsible for enforcing provisions set forth in the Labor Code, including child labor laws. The most recent data from 2011 indicate that the Department employs four labor inspectors.(4, 14)

The Vanuatu Police Force is responsible for enforcing all criminal laws, including those regarding trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The police also collaborate with the Customs, Immigrations, and Labor Departments.(14) Based on the most recent data available, the Police Force employs 50 investigators.(14)

Research did not find evidence that the Government of Vanuatu collects or publicizes data on investigations, violations, or prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor.

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Vanuatu has a free and universal education policy. However, in practice, school fees and lack of physical access to schools are significant barriers to education.(4, 13, 19, 20) The lack of standards in this area may increase the risk of children’s involvement in the worst forms of child labor.(13, 21)

In collaboration with international partners, the Government has adopted the Vanuatu Education Road Map (VERM), which establishes a comprehensive strategic direction for the country’s education sector and specifically supports the goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. VERM has three strategic goals: (1) increase equitable access to education for all people at all levels of education in Vanuatu, including by increasing government grants and phasing out parental

contributions; (2) improve the quality of education in Vanuatu; and (3) improve and strengthen the management of the education system.(22)

Nine schools in Vanuatu are implementing child protection policies, reaching more than 2,000 students. Resulting efforts have included trainings for more than 200 teachers and the implementation of codes of conduct for both teachers and students.(17) Trained teachers have also begun conducting trainings with community members and parents on child abuse and protection. Attendance in the implementing schools has improved.(17) In 2012, the Government also began implementing National Minimum Standards in Education. The standards require all primary schools to develop and implement Safe School Policies that cover child protection and emergency preparedness.(17)

The question of whether these education and child protection policies have an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

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

During the reporting period, the Government continued to implement the DWCP, which specifies the improvement of youth employment conditions as a priority and establishes the number and quality of labor inspection reports filed as measurement toward that goal.(10)

The Government also participates in UNICEF’s PAPE Program (2008-12). This regional program supports the development of evidence-based social and economic policies promoting the rights of children.(23) PAPE also provides technical assistance for collecting data on children’s issues.(23, 24) Information on specific accomplishments during the reporting period was not available at the time of reporting.

Despite these efforts, the Government does not appear to have programs that specifically address the worst forms of child labor in Vanuatu, namely dangerous agricultural work and commercial sexual exploitation.

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Define “light work” in the Employment Act.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Set the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 and establish a list of hazardous occupations and activities prohibited to children.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Establish a compulsory age for education that is equal to or older than the minimum age for work.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.	2012
	Collect and make publicly available data on investigations, violations, and prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2012
Policies	Explore ways to increase access to schooling and fully implement the policy of free, universal education.	2012
	Assess the impact that existing education and child protection policies may have on addressing child labor.	2012
Social Programs	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor, specifically dangerous work in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation.	2012

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