

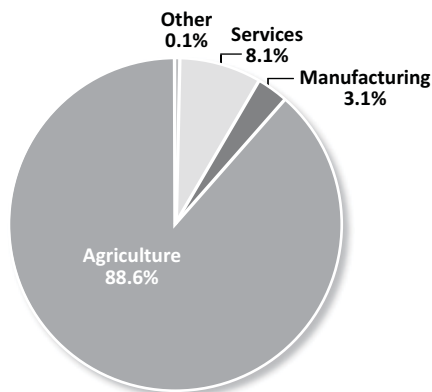
In 2011, Cameroon made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the Government enacted the Law Project Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery, which criminalizes human trafficking, slavery and debt bondage. However, the Government has not adopted comprehensive policies on the worst forms of child labor and gaps continue to exist in the enforcement of its child labor laws. Furthermore, the gap between the minimum age for work and the compulsory education age leaves children ages 11 to 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Children continue to work in dangerous activities, especially in the production of cocoa.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	36.5 (1,749,094)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	80.4
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	34.1
Primary Completion Rate		78.7



Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from ECAM3 Survey, 2007.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Cameroon are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, many of them working in dangerous activities in agriculture, including in the production of cocoa.(3-6) Children also reportedly work in the production of bananas,

coffee, palm oil, rubber and tea.(7-10) Many children working on farms, especially in the production of cocoa, handle pesticides and sharp tools, till soil and transport heavy loads.(4, 8) Reports also suggest that children raise livestock, such as cattle, risking injury and exposure to the elements.(5, 11-13)

Children, primarily girls, work as domestic servants. Child domestics may work long hours and are isolated in private homes, where they are susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(14-17) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, there are reports that children also work in artisanal gold mines and gravel quarries, carrying sand and breaking stones.(7, 11, 15, 18-20)

In the urban informal sector, children carry luggage and sell goods such as cigarettes and water. Some children drive commercial motorcycles, usually without the proper license.(15, 21-25) Children working on the streets are vulnerable to severe weather, traffic accidents and crime.(16, 23, 26) To a lesser degree, street children who live in cities such as Yaoundé and Douala transport drugs and risk being recruited into gangs.(25, 27)

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Some children in Cameroon are forced to beg. Especially in the Northern Region, it is a tradition to send boys to Koranic teachers to receive education.(24, 28-30) While some boys receive lessons, others are forced by their teachers to beg and to surrender the money that they earn.(28-30)

Children are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.(31-35) Some children are exploited in commercial sex tourism in coastal towns such as Kribi and may engage in the production of pornography. The existence and size of the problem is unknown.(16, 25, 36)

Child trafficking is also a problem and may be linked to the customary practice of sending a child to a relative or friend for school. Most trafficking occurs internally and is prevalent in the Northwest Region.(21, 37, 38) Children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor as domestic servants, and in restaurants, in bars and on tea plantations.(35, 37, 39) Children are also trafficked to work on cocoa farms and on the streets.(37, 39) Internationally, children are trafficked to Cameroon from West and Central Africa for forced labor in street vending, agriculture, fishing and spare-parts shops. Cameroon also serves as a transit country for children trafficked between Gabon and Nigeria.(37, 40, 41)

Access to education is a critical component in preventing the economic exploitation of children. In Cameroon, access to education is hindered by remote schools and lack of potable water in rural schools.(42, 43) In addition, the Government of Cameroon reports that in many regions, fewer than 40 percent of children are registered at birth. Unregistered children in Cameroon cannot access essential services, such as schooling.(23, 30)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for work at 14, and Law No. 017 sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18. The Minister of Labor may make exemptions to the minimum age for apprentices after taking into consideration the local conditions and the types of work children may perform.(44, 45) Law No. 017 prohibits children from working underground, in restaurants, hotels or bars or in any job that exceeds their physical capacity or is longer than 8 hours a day in the industrial sector.(44, 45) However, work underwater and at dangerous heights, which are activities often performed by children who fish or harvest bananas, are not deemed by law to be hazardous activities for children.(44, 45)

The law does not provide protection to children working in non-contractual and non-industrial undertakings, such as agriculture, domestic service and street vending, even though many children are known to work in these sectors.(5, 44-46) In addition, the Government lacks a mechanism for protecting children engaged in child labor in unregistered enterprises.(30, 39)

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	No
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

Law No. 98/004 mandates compulsory primary education. Children are required to attend school until age 12. This makes children ages 12 to 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are not required to be in school and are below the minimum age for work.(47, 48) Presidential Decree No. 2001/041 establishes the right to free education. However, in practice, additional school fees and the costs of books and uniforms are prohibitive for many families.(30, 48-50)

The Constitution and Law No. 15 both prohibit slavery and servitude, and Law No. 15 provides penalties for those found to be in violation of the Law.(51, 52) Law No. 15 also prohibits child trafficking.(51) The Penal Code prohibits forced labor, slavery, prostitution and the corruption of youth and kidnapping.(8, 53-55) Law No. 2010/12, Related to Cybersecurity and Cybercrime in Cameroon, prohibits electronic forms of child pornography; the Penal Code prohibits obscene publications.(54-56) The Government has not criminalized the use of children for illicit activities, which is a documented worst form of child labor in Cameroon.(27, 57)

Military service is not compulsory, and the minimum age for voluntary recruitment is age 18. Children younger than age 18 can participate in military service with parental consent.(58)

In 2011, Cameroon enacted the Law Project Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery, which criminalizes human trafficking, slavery and debt bondage.(59, 60) This law extends culpability to accomplices and corporate entities, and prescribes adequate prison terms up to 20 years with fines ranging from \$20 to \$20,000. In cases of debt bondage, penalties are doubled when the perpetrator is the guardian of the victim.(8, 60)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Interagency Consultative Committee to Implement the ILO-IPEC West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture Program to Combat Hazardous and Exploitive Child Labor (WACAP) project is authorized to coordinate the efforts to combat child labor in Cameroon.(61, 62) This Committee was established under a USDOL-funded project with the ILO-IPEC and is composed of the Ministries of Labor and Social Insurance, Social Affairs, Justice, External Relations, Women and Family Promotion, Territorial Administration and Decentralization, and Tourism; the Secretariat of State for Defense; the General Delegation for National Security; and the Customs Services for both seaports and airports.(61) However, the Consultative Committee to Implement the ILO-IPEC/WACAP project has not met for several years.(48, 63)

The Government's Inter-Ministerial Committee coordinates government efforts to combat trafficking in persons, including training stakeholders, proposing legislation and ratifying international instruments.(8) Chaired by the Secretary General of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Committee met to finalize its agenda for 2012 and approved the Law Project Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery in 2011.(8) The Government has also created within the General Delegation for National Security, a "vice squad," which is a police division established to coordinate efforts to combat sexual exploitation and the worst forms of child labor.(8, 62)

The Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance leads efforts to enforce child labor laws with its 58 labor inspectors. Given the scope and prevalence of child labor in Cameroon, it is unclear whether the number of labor inspectors is sufficient.(8, 39, 64)

Other agencies also play a role in child labor law enforcement, as well as in criminal law enforcement. The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms is charged with investigating human rights abuses, and the Minors Brigade is

responsible for investigating the use of children in hazardous work and trafficking.(48, 65) The vice squad also investigates the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, while the police, *gendarmes* (a military body charged with police duties among civilian populations, especially in rural areas) and border officials help combat the worst forms of child labor nationwide. Reportedly, the above agencies routinely lack transportation and fuel to conduct investigations.(8)

In Cameroon, child labor complaints may be initiated by the victim, a third party or officials from the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance, and may be reported to a local Ministry representative or law enforcement officer.(8) Once a complaint is filed, an investigation is conducted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance. Minor offenses are usually settled at the ministerial level; serious offenses are handled by the prosecutor's office.(8) Labor inspectors conduct routine and targeted inspections and send their reports on labor violations to the regional officer. Labor violations are later addressed at the administrative level or are sent to the prosecutor's office for judicial action.(8)

Cameroon does not regularly offer training directly to officials responsible for enforcing child labor laws. However, during the reporting period, the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, and NGOs provided specialized training on child trafficking to some of its law enforcement officers and magistrates.(8) In addition, labor inspectors receive training on the Labor Code at the National School of Administration and Magistracy and the Regional African Center for Labor Administration.(8)

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance, the Government undertook several inspections and received complaints of child labor violations during the reporting period. However, the Government was not able to provide the precise number of complaints or investigations, confirm the type of inspection or say whether penalties for violations, such as fines, were collected.(8) In 2011, four trafficking offenders were arrested. Two of the offenders were convicted, and the other two remained in pretrial detention.(8, 59) As a result of these arrests, 105 children were assisted, many of whom were from the Far North Region.(8)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government drafted a National Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking in Children. However, it has yet to ratify or officially approve the plan and it is unknown whether the plan addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor,

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including agriculture, domestic service and mining. (66, 67) Cameroon's strategy to implement its Trafficking in Persons Action Plan outlines efforts to prosecute and convict trafficking offenders; educate law enforcement personnel and social workers on the laws against child trafficking; develop and enact legislation prohibiting the trafficking of adults; train enforcement personnel to use the human trafficking database; and investigate reports of hereditary servant abuse. (68) However, it does not include a detailed action plan or timelines. (8, 68)

Cameroon has included child labor concerns in relevant development agendas and key social policy documents, including its PRSP and the National Policy Framework Document for the Full Development of the Young Child, which charts needed action in health, education and social protection. (8, 69, 70) However, the PRSP does not have budgets or detailed action plans related to the worst forms of child labor. The question of whether these policies have an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed. (70) The Government also appoints Child Parliamentarians to provide recommendations on issues related to children, including child labor. (71)

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

From 2007 to 2011, Cameroon continued to support efforts to eliminate the use of child labor on cocoa farms by participating in the 5-year Phase II Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP), funded by USAID, the World Cocoa Foundation and the international cocoa industry. STCP is a public-private partnership that promotes sustainable tree crop systems, including coffee, cocoa and cashews, and contains a component to prevent and eliminate the worst forms of child labor on farms. (72-74) The Government of Cameroon also participated in a regional project to develop a National Action

Plan on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which was funded by the Government of Italy for \$1 million from January 2008 to June 2011. (75)

Cameroon began participating in the USDOL-funded, 4-year Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project. This \$15 million, regional project aims to build the capacity of national governments and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor and forced labor; improve the evidence base through data collection and research; and strengthen legal protections and social service delivery for child domestic workers. (76) Cameroon, in partnership with Plan International, also launched a 3-year project in the Fundong, Belo, Bafut and Mbengwi Council areas to provide first aid and counseling for 2,600 vulnerable children and victims of abuse. (8, 77)

During the reporting period, Cameroon launched a nationwide awareness-raising campaign against the exploitation of children, and a program to combat child sex tourism. (8) The Government, in collaboration with UNICEF, also launched an awareness-raising campaign on the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. As part of this effort, the Government distributed pamphlets and posters with anti-trafficking messages in schools. (78)

The Government maintained its engagement with the Project to Fight the Phenomenon of Street Children, which gathers information on street children and offers health care, education and psychosocial care. (8) In addition, Cameroon continued to implement its 2008-2012 cooperative agreement to protect and provide services to child trafficking victims. (8, 79)

Despite the initiatives described here, Cameroon's social programs do not address all the sectors where children work, such as agriculture and domestic service; they are limited to the Northern Regions, which have the highest child labor participation rates. (8, 80)

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Provide legal protection to children working in non-contractual and non-industrial undertakings.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Prohibit children under age 18 from engaging in activities, such as working underwater and at dangerous heights, and enact legislation to prohibit the use, procuring or offering of children for illicit activities.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Develop a mechanism for protecting children in unregistered enterprises, including in agriculture.	2011

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Raise the age for compulsory education to 14, to match the established minimum age for work.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Implement Law No. 98/004, which mandates compulsory primary education.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Ensure that additional school fees and the costs of books and uniforms do not hinder children from accessing education.	2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Ensure the Consultative Committee to Implement the ILO-IPEC/WACAP project meets regularly to coordinate efforts to combat child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Ensure that the number of labor inspectors is sufficient given the scope and prevalence of child labor in Cameroon and allocate more resources for vehicles and fuel to the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Provide regular training on child labor and trafficking laws to enforcement personnel.	2011
	Gather and make publicly available information about child labor investigations and enforcement.	2009, 2010, 2011
Policies	Formally adopt the National Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking in Children and ensure that it addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, including agriculture, domestic service and mining.	2010, 2011
	Assess the impact that existing policies may have on addressing child labor, including the National Policy Framework Document for the Full Development of the Young Child and the PRSP.	2010, 2011
	Include in the PRSP both budgets and detailed action plans related to the worst forms of child labor.	2011
	Include a detailed timeline in the strategy to implement the Trafficking in Persons Action Plan.	2010, 2011
Social Programs	Develop social protection programs that assist children working in the worst forms of child labor in sectors such as agriculture and domestic service and expand existing programs to the Northern Region.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Ensure the registration of all children at birth.	2011

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