

In 2013, Liberia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government published data from its national Child Labor Survey conducted in 2010. Additionally, the Government launched the National Steering Committee on Child Labor and began implementing a new National Action Plan on trafficking in persons, which addresses child labor. However, children in Liberia continue to engage in child labor in agriculture and mining. The Government has yet to pass into law the Decent Work Bill, which includes a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children, and child labor law enforcement efforts are still inadequate.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Liberia are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and mining.(1-4) On some rubber plantations, children are employed to tap rubber trees, clear brush, and carry buckets.(1, 3, 5) Children are engaged in mining natural resources, including alluvial diamonds.(1-4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Liberia.

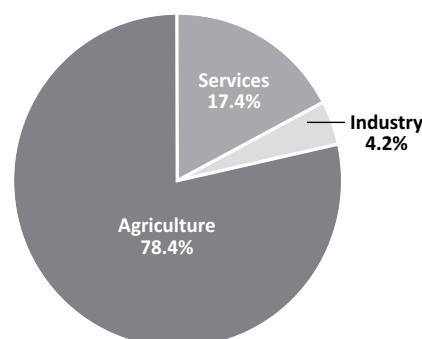
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	16.6 (132,340)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	75.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	14.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		65.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(6)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey, 2010.(7)

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



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	Working on rubber plantations (1, 3, 5, 8)
	Coal burning/producing charcoal* (8)
	Farming, activities unknown (1, 8-10)
Industry	Mining for diamonds and gold* (1-4, 9, 11)
	Stone cutting* and crushing* (1, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13)
	Construction, activities unknown (4, 14)
Services	Domestic work (4, 12, 13)
	Working in accommodation and food services (10)
	Street work, including vending and porting (4, 8, 12, 14-16)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Repairing motor vehicles and motorcycles (10)
	Forced labor in illicit activities, including selling drugs (4, 17)
	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (18)
	Domestic work, street vending, farming, and begging, as a result of human trafficking (4, 17-20)

* 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.

Liberia

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT







Although security concerns remain along Liberia's border with Côte d'Ivoire, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reports the situation is stable, and Ivorian refugees continue to return to Cote d'Ivoire.(21) However, evidence exists that some Ivorian refugee girls engage in commercial sexual exploitation.(17) Additionally, children are trafficked to Liberia from Sierra Leone, as well as from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Nigeria for domestic work, street vending, commercial sexual exploitation, farming, and begging.(20)

The school infrastructure in Liberia remains lacking and faces continued budgetary and resource constraints.(20, 22, 23) The limited number of schools in some areas impedes access to education and increases the risk of children engaging in the worst forms of child labor.(20, 22, 23) Sources indicate that sexual abuse by male teachers in schools may be a barrier to girls' education.(24, 25) Moreover, the UN has noted that victims of sexual violence in schools often have extended absences or drop out.(26) Liberian parents are required by law to register their infants within 14 days of birth. However, sources indicate that fewer than 5 percent of births are registered for birth certificates, which may affect access to education.(1, 27)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Liberia has ratified some 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 relevant 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	Labor Law (28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 7 of the Children's Law (5, 12, 29)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Constitution (12, 30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Children's Law; Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons (12, 29, 31)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 3 of the Children's Law; Chapter 14 of the Act to Amend the New Penal Code (12, 17, 20, 29, 32)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Children's Law (17, 29)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 3 of the Children's Law (29, 33)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act of 2011 (1, 9, 13, 34, 35)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3 of the Children's Law (29)

*No conscription or no standing military.

The Government has not ratified the CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child

Pornography.(36) The Labor Law sets the minimum age for work at 16 for the agriculture sector. The minimum age for work in the industrial sector is 18.(28) However, children younger than age 16 are allowed to work, provided they are not working during school hours and the employer can demonstrate that they are attending school regularly and have a basic education.(28) The Labor Law does not protect children in domestic service. Additionally, there are no penalties for violations of child labor laws, which inhibits prosecution.(12, 28) However, at times, perpetrators can be prosecuted under the Penal Code's child endangerment provision.(37) The Decent Work Bill is still pending legislative approval.(9, 38) The bill would provide additional protections for children, including a hazardous work list.(4) However, the bill's list of hazardous work is not comprehensive, and does not include all activities that are prohibited under international standards.(34) Also, although education is free, in practice, many children still pay school fees to attend school, which may prevent some children from attending school.(1, 8, 13, 38)

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
Ministry of Justice's Women and Children Protection Section (WCPS)	Enforce laws relating to violations involving the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking.(37, 39)
Liberian National Police's Anti-Trafficking Unit	Enforce trafficking laws.(27)
Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN)	Enforce trafficking laws in external cases.(9)
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforce labor laws, including child labor laws.(9)
Liberian Transnational Crime Unit	Coordinate responses to international organized crime, including monitoring and prosecuting criminal violations involving the worst forms of child labor as they relate to trafficking and the use of children in illicit activities.(40)

Criminal law enforcement agencies in Liberia took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms. However, research found no evidence that labor law enforcement agencies took such actions.

Labor Law Enforcement

The National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL) and several ministries, including MOL, generally perform preliminary investigations on child labor cases. However, MOL's budget is not adequate, and there are only 15 labor inspectors in Liberia, which is less than one per district.(8) In addition, research found no information on the number of labor inspections conducted, child labor violations found, or citations and penalties issued by the Government in 2013. Child labor cases requiring further investigation or possible prosecution are referred as child endangerment cases to Ministry of Justice's WCPS.(4, 9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

WCPS has approximately 266 investigators.(9) In 2013, there were no child labor prosecutions, convictions, or penalties. A source indicates that, during the reporting period, WCPS processed cases of child endangerment, including some child labor cases.(9) However, research found that agencies responsible for enforcement efforts lack adequate resources. Moreover, the ILO and other stakeholders have noted that severe budgetary constraints, a lack of resources (such as computer equipment), and staff training impede the efforts of NACOMAL and WCPS to combat the worst forms of child labor.(4, 9, 20, 41)

In 2013, the Government rescued 34 children from trafficking. The Government also investigated two suspected traffickers and, at the time of writing, the cases were pending trial.(27) During the reporting period, law enforcement agents received anti-trafficking training, and the Government incorporated anti-trafficking training into its orientation curriculum for all new police officers.(27)

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 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL)	Monitor child labor issues and direct child labor policies. Headed by the MOL, is composed of representatives from 16 other organizations, including NGOs and international and civil society organizations.(4, 42) Objectives include reforming national child labor laws and designing a national child labor database.(13, 42)
National Steering Committee on Child Labor (NSC)	Advocate eliminating child labor, especially its worst forms. Chaired by the MOL, is composed of NACOMAL, government ministries, private sector representatives, and NGOs.(38) Objectives include Liberia's ratification of ILO C. 138.(38)
Child Protection Network	Coordinate child protection efforts through monthly meetings to discuss child protection issues, including child labor and trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development, is composed of the MOL, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, WCPS, the National Police, civil society organizations, and several NGOs.(4) Also responsible for coordinating referrals for provision of services to child victims, with support from international and national organizations.(9, 13) In addition, manage seven community child welfare committees in different counties that monitor children's issues at the community level and make referrals to other organizations.(13)
Anti-Human-Trafficking Task Force (TTF)	Coordinate anti-trafficking activities. Chaired by the MOL and includes the Commissioner of BIN, the National Police, and representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Internal Affairs.(9)

During the reporting period, the Government launched the new NSC and held its first meeting in August 2013.(9, 38) In May 2013, the MOL, in partnership with ILO-IPEC, organized a 4-day child labor conference that included more than 60 representatives from government ministries, civil society organizations, and international partners. Participants developed recommendations for future Government efforts against child labor, including ratifying ILO C. 138 and conducting another child labor survey.(8) In 2013, TTF held regular bi-monthly meetings.(27)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan for Trafficking in Personst	Outlines the Government's comprehensive anti-trafficking efforts, including for child victims.(9, 27)
Direct Assistance and Support to Trafficked Victims Standard Operation Procedures†	Establishes roles and responsibilities for coordinating Government assistance to trafficking victims.(27)
National Social Welfare Policy	Prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that target children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.(43)
National Employment Policy*	Aims to provide vocational training for youth.(44)
Rubber Industry Master Plan 2010–2040*	Prioritizes the development of the rubber industry and includes provisions for improving workers' standard of living, access to credit, and children's access to education.(45)
Education for All Policy 2010–2013*	Aims to provide universal primary education by 2015.(46)
Education Sector Plan 2010–2020*	Aims to improve the education infrastructure, as well as the access to and quality of primary education.(46)
Education Sector HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2010–2014*	Aims to provide education to vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS.(47)
New Deal Trust Policy*	Commits the Government of Liberia to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its key ministries, such as the Ministries of Finance, Health, and Education.(48)
2030 Vision Policy 2012–2017*	Outlines the Government of Liberia's goal to become a middle income country by 2030, by increasing focus on education and livelihoods.(49, 50)

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

Policy	Description
Liberia Youth Act (formerly the Liberian National Youth Policy)	Outlines the Government of Liberia's youth policy, which includes employment and education components.(51, 52)

*The impact of this policy on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Policy was launched during the reporting period.

In 2013, the Government released data from a national Child Labor Survey that was conducted by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services in 2010. The report, which was supported by the ILO, provides information on the scope of the child labor situation in Liberia.(9, 10, 53) Additionally, the Government, in partnership with the ILO, released a report on youth employment, including children ages 15–17, titled “Labor Market Transitions of Young Women and Men in Liberia.”(9) The Liberian National Youth Policy has been renamed the Liberia Youth Act and was passed by the House in September 2013; as of the writing of this report, it awaited passage by the Senate.(51, 52)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2013, the Government of Liberia participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
National Child Labor Survey†	Joint Government-ILO survey that provides information on the scope of the child labor situation in Liberia. The survey was conducted by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services in 2010, and the results were published in 2013.(9, 10, 53)
Labor Market Transitions of Young Women and Men in Liberia†	Joint Government-ILO report on youth employment, including children ages 15–17. The report was released in 2013.(9)
Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaign	MOL program that uses radio and billboard messages to raise public awareness on trafficking.(27)
Liberia Agriculture Investment Program*	\$175 million multi-donor program that aims to enhance household livelihoods in the agriculture sector by building linkages with markets and improving rural infrastructure, which may have a positive effect on reducing child labor.(54)
Actions to Reduce Child Labor	\$6 million, USDOL-funded, 4-year project implemented by Winrock International to combat child labor in the rubber sector.(55) Aims to withdraw and prevent 10,100 children from engaging in the worst forms of child labor by providing education, as well as livelihoods support to 3,700 vulnerable families. Implemented in collaboration with local rubber companies.(55)
Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labor in West Africa and Strengthening Sub-Regional Cooperation through ECOWAS I & II	USDOL-funded regional projects that supported ECOWAS to strengthen its role in combating the worst forms of child labor in the West Africa sub-region by providing policy and capacity building support for all ECOWAS states.(56, 57)
Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries, to support the priorities of the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016 established by the Hague Global Child Labor Conference in 2010. Aims to build the capacity of the national government and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor.(58)
West Africa Coast Initiative *	\$5.8 million, UNODC-funded, 3-year regional initiative that aims to strengthen national capacities and cross-border cooperation to address organized crime, including human trafficking and drug trafficking.(40, 59)
Social Cash Transfer Program*	\$3.1 million, EU-funded, program that provides regular payments to poor and “labor constrained” households in Bomi County, along with other counties. Labor constrained households include households in which the majority of household members are unable to work for reasons such as disability.(60) Targets 5,000 households, and each beneficiary household receives between \$10 and \$25 per month.(60)
Educating and Protecting Vulnerable Children in Family Settings Project*	USAID-funded, 4-year project aims to enhance protection systems for vulnerable children, including improving access to primary education and health services.(61)

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor (cont)

Program	Description
Fast Track Initiative Grant for Basic Education*	\$40 million, World Bank-funded project that aims to improve primary education access and quality.(62, 63)
Youth Employment and Skills Project *	\$6 million, World Bank-funded project that aims to provide employment opportunities and training to youth. (64) Targeted 49,500 direct beneficiaries and ended during the reporting period.(64)
Feed the Future Project*	\$75 million, USAID-funded project that aims to improve food security and nutrition among vulnerable populations.(65)
Refugee Camps and Services*	\$42.5 million, UN High Commissioner for Refugees-funded project that maintains refugee camps and provides essential services to Ivorian refugees, including children.(21, 66)

* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Program was launched during the reporting period.

Although Liberia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.

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 Liberia (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Laws	Ratify the CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013
	Pass legislation, potentially the Decent Work Bill, which includes a hazardous work list for children younger than age 18, and sufficiently strict penalties for engaging in child labor, in compliance with international standards.	2010 – 2013
	Ensure that relevant child labor laws and regulations apply equally to all children, including to those in domestic service.	2011 – 2013
Enforcement	Fully fund child labor enforcement mechanisms and prosecution efforts, such as NACOMAL, MOL, WCPS, and the Anti-Human-Trafficking Task Force, and provide necessary training for such officials to enforce child labor laws.	2010 – 2013
	Ensure there are an adequate number of labor inspectors to effectively enforce labor laws, including child labor laws.	2013
	Publish data on inspections, violations, citations, and penalties assessed for the worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2013
Government Policies	Formally adopt and implement, potentially through the Liberia Youth Act, the National Youth Policy for Liberia.	2010 – 2013
	Assess the impact that existing child protection, livelihoods, and education policies may have on addressing child labor.	2010 – 2013
	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in farming and construction to inform policies and programs.	2013
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in farming and construction to inform policies and programs.	2013
	Improve access to education by building additional schools.	2013
	Provide additional training to teachers in order to stop sexual abuse of students.	2013
	Ensure that education is free, by eliminating school fees and other expenses.	2012 – 2013
	Assess and evaluate the impact that existing social programs may have on addressing child labor.	2010 – 2013
	Increase the scope of existing social programs to reach more children at risk of and engaged in the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2013

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