

Liberia

The Government of Liberia conducted awareness-raising campaigns and participated in projects to combat the worst forms of child labor. However, the Government does not effectively enforce existing child labor laws and has yet to adopt the National Children's Act or a comprehensive list of hazardous labor. The worst forms of child labor continue to exist in agriculture (rubber tapping) and mining (diamonds) sectors.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	32.7*
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	40.1
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	20.6

* Population of working children: 358,179



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Liberia are engaged in the worst forms of child labor,³⁴⁰³ primarily in the agriculture and mining sectors. Some children working in agriculture are engaged in risky activities, including using dangerous tools and applying harmful pesticides.³⁴⁰⁴ On some rubber plantations, children are employed to tap rubber trees, clear brush and carry buckets.³⁴⁰⁵

Children are engaged in stone crushing and the mining of natural resources, including alluvial diamonds. Research suggests that children also mine gold.³⁴⁰⁶ Children's work in mining often involves unsafe activities, such as handling dangerous tools and carrying heavy loads.³⁴⁰⁷ Liberian children are also engaged in the informal sector and as porters, truck loaders and sand baggers, all of which involve transporting heavy loads. Some children are employed as porters to offload imported goods from Côte d'Ivoire off commercial trucks.³⁴⁰⁸ In the domestic service sector, children commonly work long hours and are exposed to physical and sexual exploitation.³⁴⁰⁹

Children, especially girls, are reportedly engaged in prostitution.³⁴¹⁰ Some children are trafficked within Liberia for domestic service and exploitative labor.³⁴¹¹

Between 1990 and 2003, Liberia was engaged in intermittent armed conflict, which resulted in the displacement of entire communities and destroyed the country's political, economic and physical infrastructure, leaving many children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.³⁴¹² Research indicates that the war destroyed the school infrastructure, and due to budgetary and resource constraints, that infrastructure is still being rebuilt. The limited number of schools in some areas impedes access to education and increases the risk of children engaging in child labor.³⁴¹³

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

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 18.³⁴¹⁴ Children younger than age 16 are prohibited from working during the school day and may only work

for wages if the employer can demonstrate that they are attending school regularly and have a basic education.³⁴¹⁵ According to the Labor Law, recruiters are permitted to hire children between ages 16 and 18 for occupations that the Ministry of Labor determines are not harmful to the children's physical and moral development.³⁴¹⁶ The Labor Law does not include any penalties for engaging a child in hazardous labor.³⁴¹⁷ Research indicates that the Government of Liberia has plans to update its labor laws through the draft New Labor Laws of Liberia 2011 bill.³⁴¹⁸

	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	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Labor Law does not provide a comprehensive list of hazardous activities that are prohibited for children younger than age 18.³⁴¹⁹ In particular, the law does not protect children against physical and psychological abuse, dangerous work underground or in confined spaces and dangerous work that involves the transport of heavy loads, all of which occur in sectors where Liberian children work.³⁴²⁰

The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia prohibits forced and bonded labor and slavery.³⁴²¹

The Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons within the Republic of Liberia criminalizes the trafficking of children for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor.³⁴²² The Act to Amend the New Penal Code Chapter 14 Section 14.70 and to Provide for Gang Rape prohibits rape, including intercourse with a child younger than age 18.³⁴²³ As a result, the law does not protect children from commercial sexual exploitation in the absence of trafficking. The Government has drafted but not passed the National Children's Act, which includes the Government's policy plan to combat the worst forms of child labor.³⁴²⁴

According to the Education Law of 2001, the Government of Liberia has established the right to free primary education through age 12. However, the gap between the compulsory education age and the minimum age for work (age 16) places children at risk of falling into child labor.³⁴²⁵

Institutional Mechanisms for Monitoring and Enforcement

The National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL) is charged with monitoring child labor issues and directing child labor policies. The commission is headed by the Ministry of Labor and includes representatives from 16 other organizations, including NGOs and international and civil society organizations.³⁴²⁶ The objectives of NACOMAL include awareness raising, reforming national child labor laws and designing a national child labor database.³⁴²⁷ The Child Protection Network, chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development, coordinates child protection efforts through monthly meetings to discuss child protection issues, including child labor and trafficking. Members of the network include the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Justice's Women and Children Protection Section (WCPS), the Liberia National Police Force and civil society organizations.³⁴²⁸ Due to resource and capacity constraints, the Government does not collect or publish data on child labor, which hinders coordination and enforcement efforts.³⁴²⁹

NACOMAL and other ministries generally perform preliminary investigations on exploitative child labor cases.³⁴³⁰ Although a labor commissioner and labor investigators are present in all of Liberia's 15 counties, underfunding and understaffing limits their ability to investigate issues specifically related to child labor.³⁴³¹ Child labor cases requiring further investigation or possible prosecution are referred to WCPS. WCPS has approximately 275 investigators.³⁴³² During the reporting period, a number of child labor cases were referred to NACOMAL and WCPS, yet none resulted in prosecution.³⁴³³ Severe budgetary constraints and lack of resources, rather than lack of will, impede the efforts of NACOMAL and WCPS to combat the worst forms of child labor.³⁴³⁴

Liberia also has mechanisms in place for monitoring and enforcing criminal violations of the worst forms of child labor as they relate to trafficking and the use of children in illicit activities. The Ministry of Justice, through WCPS and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, is responsible for enforcing laws against these specific activities.³⁴³⁵ The Government coordinates anti-trafficking activities through the National Human Trafficking Task Force, which is chaired by the Ministry of Labor and includes representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs, the National Police Force and the Commissioner of Immigration.³⁴³⁶ The task force had previously met on a monthly basis but did not hold any meetings between June and December 2010.³⁴³⁷ The task force publishes reports that are accessible to the public and assists the Liberian National Police Force with human trafficking investigations and monitoring court cases.³⁴³⁸ Despite the task force's efforts, the Government of Liberia did not prosecute any traffickers during the reporting period. However, two cases were reported and one is pending investigation.³⁴³⁹

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Liberia has a number of policy frameworks that address child labor.³⁴⁴⁰

The Government has undertaken a Country Program Action Plan (2008-2012) with UNICEF that seeks to reduce the vulnerability of children to exploitation, including child labor and child trafficking.³⁴⁴¹ The plan calls for UNICEF to complete a national child labor analysis and build the capacity of Liberian institutions to prevent the worst forms of child labor.³⁴⁴² The plan provides indicators, targets and sources of data to measure UNICEF's progress.³⁴⁴³

The Government of Liberia has included child labor issues in other development agendas and social policies. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Liberia (2008-2012) tasks the Government with reforming national labor laws in accordance with ILO conventions and assisting in the implementation of child labor policies.³⁴⁴⁴ The framework requires other UN agencies to promote youth employment and increase access to quality education.³⁴⁴⁵ The Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2011) recognizes the link between household income and child labor and highlights the importance of protecting children from physical, psychological and sexual abuse.³⁴⁴⁶ Liberia's National Social Welfare Policy prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that target children engaged in exploitative labor and child trafficking.³⁴⁴⁷ The Liberian National Youth Policy of 2005 identifies children working in the informal sector, children living and working in the streets and children associated with armed groups as priority target groups for assistance.³⁴⁴⁸ However, the National Youth Policy for Liberia has not been formally passed to date.³⁴⁴⁹ Additionally, the Government of Liberia has a National Youth Policy Action Plan, which provides youth of legal working age with training in entrepreneurship skills and links to business mentoring programs and cooperatives.³⁴⁵⁰

While these policies address some child labor concerns, the impact of these policies on child labor is yet to be assessed.³⁴⁵¹

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

During the reporting period, the Government of Liberia supported the UN Joint Program for Employment and Empowerment of Young Women and Men, which aims to produce decent employment for disadvantaged youth in the informal economy and agriculture.³⁴⁵²

The Government of Liberia participated in the USDOL-funded, \$6 million Child Labor Education Initiative project in Sierra Leone and Liberia from 2005 to 2010, which was implemented by the International Rescue Committee. The project withdrew 8,243 children and prevented an additional 21,647 children from exploitative child labor in sectors such as agriculture, mining and street vending.³⁴⁵³ The Government of Liberia also participated in the USDOL-funded National Child Labor SIMPOC survey, which ended in September 2010.³⁴⁵⁴

During the reporting period, the Government cooperated with a USDOL-funded grant for research on forced labor in the rubber sector, which is ongoing through September 2011.³⁴⁵⁵

During the reporting period, with financial support from NGOs, NACOMAL conducted awareness-raising sessions on the importance of children's education. The National Children's Parliament, comprised of student representatives from all 15 Liberian counties, advocated for stronger laws to protect children, such as the draft National Children's Act.³⁴⁵⁶ The Ministry of Gender and Development established seven local committees to promote children's welfare. Each committee has 11 volunteers who monitor and report on instances of exploitative child labor.³⁴⁵⁷

Despite Government efforts, child labor continues to be an issue, which suggests that the scope of existing programs is insufficient to address the problem in Liberia

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

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Adopt a hazardous labor list that defines and prohibits hazardous labor for children younger than age 18 and adopt sufficiently strict penalties.
- Pass the National Children's Act and ensure the act complies with international standards.
- Make the legal age for compulsory education equivalent to the minimum age for work.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Conduct national child labor surveys and publish collected data to inform strategic planning and evidence-based policies.
- Fully fund child labor enforcement mechanisms and prosecution efforts, possibly through NACOMAL or the task force, to enforce child labor laws.
- Consistently collect and publish data to monitor children's engagement in the worst forms of child labor.

IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Formally pass the National Youth Policy for Liberia.
- Assess the impact that existing policies may have on addressing child labor, particularly in the agriculture and mining sectors.

IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS:

- Increase the scope of existing social programs to reach more children at risk of and engaged in the worst forms of child labor.

³⁴⁰³ Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates, 2005-2011. Data provided are from 2007. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

³⁴⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Liberia," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2010*, Washington, DC, April 8, 2011, section 7d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154354.htm>. See also Government of Liberia and Macro International, *Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2007*, Monrovia, 2008, 17; available from http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pub_details.cfm?id=791.

³⁴⁰⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Liberia," section 7d. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 20, 2009*, para 2e.

³⁴⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Liberia," section 7d. See also UN Mission in Liberia, *Report on the Human Rights Situation in Liberia: January-June 2009*, Monrovia, May 2009, para 41; available from <http://unmil.org/>. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 3. See also UN Development Group, *UN Joint Program for Employment and Empowerment of Young Women and Men in Liberia*, February 16, 2009, para 19; available from <http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=JointProgramme&page=JointProgrammeView&CountryID=&&JointProgrammeID=566&>.

³⁴⁰⁷ International Rescue Committee, *Child Labor and Education in Liberia: Needs Assessment in Targeted Communities*, New York, June 2006.

³⁴⁰⁸ International Rescue Committee, *Countering Youth and Child Labour Through Education (CYCLE)*, Project Document, August 2007, 9. See also Government of Liberia Ministry of Gender and Development official, Interview with USDOL consultant, June 26, 2006. See also Women's Refugee Commission, *Dreams Deferred: Educational and Skills-building Needs and Opportunities for Youth in Liberia*, February 16, 2009, 2-3; available from www.crin.org/docs/liberia_youth_report_2009_final.pdf. See also UN Mission in Liberia, *Human Rights Situation in Liberia*.

³⁴⁰⁹ International Rescue Committee, *CYCLE Project Document*, 9. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 3. See also U.S. Department of State,

"Liberia," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142760.htm>.

³⁴¹⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Liberia," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2009*, Washington, DC, March 11, 2010, section 6; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135961.htm>.

³⁴¹¹ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Liberia." See also UNICEF, *News note: Liberia launches its situational analysis report on human trafficking*, Monrovia, March 1, 2010; available from http://www.unicef.org/media/media_52882.html?q=printme.

³⁴¹² UNICEF, *The Country Programme Action Plan 2008-2012 between The Government of Liberia and the United Nations Children's Fund*, 2008, paras 3, 4; available from www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Pub_Liberia_CPAP08-12.pdf.

³⁴¹³ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, March 11, 2011. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, June 27, 2011.

³⁴¹⁴ Government of Liberia, *Labor Law (Title 18 and 18A)*, (1956), section 74; available from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_country=LBR&p_classification=01.02&p_origin=COUNTRY&p_sortby=SORTBY_COUNTRY. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 4.

³⁴¹⁵ Government of Liberia, *Labor Law*, section 74.

³⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1506, para 11. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 20, 2009*, para 2a.

³⁴¹⁷ Government of Liberia, *Labor Law*, section 74.

³⁴¹⁸ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, March 11, 2011. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, June 27, 2011.

³⁴¹⁹ Government of Liberia, *Labor Law*, section 74.

³⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, section 74. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 4.

³⁴²¹ Government of Liberia, *Constitution of the Republic of Liberia*, (January 6, 1986), section 74; available from <http://www.tlcafrica.com/constitution-1986.htm#chapter3>.

³⁴²² Government of Liberia, *An Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons within the Republic of Liberia*, (2005), article 1, sections 6, 7; available from <https://www.unodc.org/tldb/showDocument.do?documentUid=7975&node=docs&cmd=add&country=LIR>.

³⁴²³ Government of Liberia, *An Act to Amend the New Penal Code Chapter 14 Sections 14.70 and 14.71 and to Provide for Gang Rape*, (December 29, 2005); available from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/44868e674.html>. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, June 27, 2011.

- ³⁴²⁴ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 8.
- ³⁴²⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Liberia,” section 7. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, May 20, 2011.
- ³⁴²⁶ Government of Liberia, *Ministry of Labour; National Commission on Child Labour (NACOMAL); Plan of Action 2007-2016*, Monrovia, 2007, 1-2. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 5.
- ³⁴²⁷ Government of Liberia, *Plan of Action 2007-2016*, 3.
- ³⁴²⁸ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, paras 3, 5. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, June 27, 2011.
- ³⁴²⁹ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, paras 3, 5. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, June 27, 2011.
- ³⁴³⁰ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, June 27, 2011.
- ³⁴³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴³² U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, paras 5-7.
- ³⁴³³ *Ibid.*, para 6.
- ³⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, para 5.
- ³⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, para 7.
- ³⁴³⁶ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, February 1, 2010*, para 2b.
- ³⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, para 4d.
- ³⁴³⁹ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Liberia.” See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*.
- ³⁴⁴⁰ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 9.
- ³⁴⁴¹ UNICEF, *Country Programme of Action 2008-2012*, paras 49, 51.
- ³⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 23, 44.
- ³⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 42, 44.
- ³⁴⁴⁴ UN Development Group, *UN Development Assistance Framework for Liberia 2008-2012: Consolidating Peace and National Recovery for Sustainable Development*, May 2007, 37; available from <http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=CoordinationProfile&page=Country&CountryID=LIR>.
- ³⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27, 40.
- ³⁴⁴⁶ *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, International Monetary Fund, Washington, July 2008, 185-187; available from <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08219.pdf>.
- ³⁴⁴⁷ Government of Liberia, *Social Welfare Policy*, Monrovia, 2009, xi, 9; available from <http://liberiamohsw.org/Policies&Plan.html>.
- ³⁴⁴⁸ Government of Liberia, *A National Youth Policy for Liberia: A Framework for Setting Priorities and Executing Action*, Monrovia, Monrovia, December 2005, 20-22; available from <http://www.flyliberia.org/Youth%20Policy%20-%20Final%20Doc%2006.doc>.
- ³⁴⁴⁹ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, May 20, 2011.
- ³⁴⁵⁰ Gary Walker, Jane C. Miller Wood, and Eric Allemano, *Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment*, USAID, Washington, April 2009, 5, 30, 31; available from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADQ258.pdf
- ³⁴⁵¹ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, June 27, 2011.
- ³⁴⁵² UN Development Group, *UN Joint Program for Employment and Empowerment*, 2, 4, 6, 8.
- ³⁴⁵³ U.S. Department of Labor, *Technical Cooperation Summary-Countering Youth and Child Labor Through Education in Sierra Leone and Liberia (CYCLE)*, Project Summary, Washington, DC, 2009; available from <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/map/countries/liberia.htm>.
- ³⁴⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, *Operations Research Summary*, Research Summary, Washington, DC, 2010.
- ³⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴⁵⁶ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 9. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia official, E-mail communication, June 27, 2011.
- ³⁴⁵⁷ U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, January 26, 2011*, para 9.