

In 2011, Liberia made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Liberia adopted the Education Reform Act that increased the compulsory education age, eliminating the gap between the compulsory education age and the minimum age for work. However, the Government has yet to implement the new National Children's Act or pass into law the Decent Work Bill and the worst forms of child labor persist, particularly in dangerous activities in the agriculture and mining sectors.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	32.7 (358,179)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	40.1
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	20.6
Primary Completion Rate		62.3

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2008, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

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

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Liberia are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in dangerous activities in the agriculture and mining sectors. Some children working in agriculture are engaged in risky activities, including using dangerous tools and applying harmful pesticides.(2-5) On some rubber plantations, children are employed to tap rubber trees, clear brush and carry buckets, which are considered dangerous activities.(2, 7-9)

Children are engaged in mining of natural resources such as alluvial diamonds.(2, 9-12) Although evidence is limited, children are known to mine gold, engaging in dangerous activities such as digging trenches with shovels and pick axes and washing gravel. Some children are also engaged in quarrying and stone cutting and crushing, though the scope of the problem is unknown.(2, 10-14) Children's work in mining and quarrying often involves unsafe activities, such as carrying heavy loads and working long hours.(15)

Liberian children are engaged in the informal sector as vendors, porters, truck loaders and construction workers (which may involve breaking rocks and digging sand), all of which involve transporting heavy loads.(10, 12, 14, 16-20) Some



children working as porters offload goods from neighboring countries from commercial trucks.(10, 12, 14, 16-21) An unknown number of street children sell goods on the street; some are forced to beg and engage in illicit activities, such as selling drugs.(22) In the domestic service sector, children commonly work long hours and are exposed to exploitative conditions.(12, 14, 16, 23)

Children are trafficked within Liberia for domestic service and exploitative labor.(23-25) Children are also trafficked to Liberia from Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire; they are also trafficked from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Nigeria for domestic service, street vending, sexual exploitation, agricultural labor and forced begging.(25)

During the year, an estimated 160,000 refugees fled the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire for Liberia. While some of the refugees have voluntarily returned to Côte d'Ivoire since October 2011, unaccompanied and unprotected child refugees continue to be at risk of the worst forms of child labor.(26, 27) During the reporting period, there were a few isolated reports that some Ivorian refugee girls had engaged in sex for food and shelter in Liberia.(22, 28, 29)

Between 1990 and 2003, Liberia was engaged in intermittent internal and regional armed conflict, which resulted in the displacement of entire communities and the destruction of the country's political, economic and physical infrastructure, including schools.(30) Due to budgetary and resource constraints, the school infrastructure is still in the process of getting rebuilt. 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.(25, 31)

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.(12, 32) Children younger than age 16 are prohibited from working during school hours and may only work for wages if the employer can demonstrate that they are attending school regularly and have a basic education.(32) According to the Labor Law, recruiters are permitted to hire children between ages 16 and 18 for light work in occupations that the Ministry of Labor determines are not harmful to the children’s physical and moral development.(7, 32) While the Labor Law prohibits the use of children in the worst forms of child labor, it does not include any penalties for engaging children in such activities, which inhibits prosecution.(12, 32) However, perpetrators can be prosecuted under the Penal Law’s child endangerment provision.(21)

	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	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Labor Law does not provide a comprehensive list of hazardous activities that are prohibited to children younger than age 18.(32) In particular, the current Law does not protect children against physical and psychological abuse, dangerous work underground or in confined spaces (such as mining and quarrying) and dangerous work that involves the transport of heavy loads, all of which occur in sectors in which Liberian children work. The current law also does not protect children engaged in domestic labor, the informal sector and work on the streets.(12, 32) The National Children’s Act prohibits the worst forms of child labor—including engaging children in illicit

activities, prostitution, pornography and armed conflict—and establishes a list of hazardous activities prohibited for children. Although the National Children’s Act was formally passed into law by the Legislature in September 2011, it is awaiting dissemination and implementation.(12, 22, 25) The Decent Work Bill would provide additional protections for children—including a hazardous labor list—but it also was not formally passed by the Senate during the reporting period.(12, 33, 34)

The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia prohibits forced labor, bonded labor and slavery.(12, 35) The Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons within the Republic of Liberia criminalizes internal and international trafficking of children for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor.(12, 36) The Act to Amend the New Penal Code Chapter 14 Section 14.70 and to Provide for (the crime of) Gang Rape prohibits rape, including intercourse with a child younger than age 18.(37, 38) When enforced, the penalties for violating these laws are reportedly sufficient to serve as deterrents.(12) The minimum age for voluntary military recruitment into the Liberian Army is 18.(39)

The newly adopted Education Reform Act of 2011 increases the compulsory age of education from age 12 to age 15. The Act eliminated the gap between the compulsory education age and minimum age for work—which is age 16.(12, 40)

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.(12, 41) The objectives of NACOMAL include reforming national child labor laws and designing a national child labor database.(12, 41) In addition, the Child Protection Network, chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development (MOGD), 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.(12, 38) The Child Protection Network also is responsible for coordinating referral and provision of services to child victims and receives support from international and national organizations in doing so.(12, 25, 42) In addition, the MOGD manages seven community child welfare committees in different counties

that monitor children's issues at the community level and also makes referrals to other organizations.(14)

NACOMAL and other ministries generally perform preliminary investigations on exploitative child labor cases.(38) Child labor cases requiring further investigation or possible prosecution are referred to WCPS. WCPS has approximately 275 investigators.(12) During the reporting period, WCPS processed 34 cases of child endangerment, but none were identified as worst forms of child labor cases.(12) According to the ILO and other stakeholders, 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.(12, 25, 38)

Liberia has mechanisms in place for 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.(12) These include a number of specialized enforcement mechanisms. The Government established the Liberian Transnational Crime Unit during the reporting period, with assistance of \$5.8 million over the next 3.5 years from UNODC.(43) The Unit brings together Liberian law enforcement and security experts from the National Police, National Security Agency, Customs, Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) and other law enforcement agencies to coordinate responses to international organized crime (including human trafficking).(43) In addition, the Government reports that it maintains a Task Force on Rubber Plantations that includes child labor monitoring on rubber plantations. Research has not uncovered the degree to which the Task Force and the child labor monitoring systems are functioning.(25) However, reports do suggest that occupational safety guidelines and monitoring of implementation of such guidelines are not sufficient.(9, 44)

The Ministry of Justice, through WCPS and BIN, is responsible for enforcing laws relating to violations involving the worst forms of child labor including trafficking. 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, and by the Liberia National Police and the Commissioner of BIN.(45) The Government of Liberia investigated one trafficking case during the reporting period, which is currently pending before the courts.(12, 21, 23, 25, 39) The Government did not make accessible to the public the child labor or trafficking data regarding investigation, complaints or prosecution.(12)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Liberia has a number of policy frameworks that address child labor.(12) 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.(30) The plan calls for national child labor data collection and analysis and management capacity building of Liberian institutions and includes indicators, targets and sources of data to measure progress.(30) However, due to resource and staffing constraints, the Government did not collect or publish data on child labor during the reporting period, which hinders enforcement and policy implementation efforts.(12, 19, 38, 46)

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 assist in the implementation of child labor policies.(47) The Framework promotes youth empowerment and improving access to quality education.(47) 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.(48)

Liberia's National Social Welfare Policy prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that target children engaged in exploitive labor and child trafficking.(49) The Government has a National Employment policy that aims to provide vocational training for youth.(50) The Liberian National Youth Policy of 2005 identified as priority target groups for assistance children working in the informal sector, children living and working in the streets and children associated with armed groups.(51) However, the National Youth Policy for Liberia has not been formally adopted as of the writing of this report and its status is unclear.(38) 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.(52) The 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.(53)

The Government has an Education for All Policy (2010-2013) that aims to provide universal primary education by 2015. The Ministry of Education has an Education Sector Plan

(2010-2020) that aims to improve the education infrastructure, as well as access to, and quality of, primary education.(54) The Ministry of Education has a 5-year Plan (2010-2014) to provide education to vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS.(55)

While the child protection, livelihoods and education policies noted above address some child labor concerns, the impact of these policies on child labor has yet to be assessed.(38)

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

The Government continued to participate during the year in two regional USDOL-funded projects, which run through 2013—a 4-year, \$7.9 million project and a 3-year, \$5 million project.(56, 57) These projects are designed to strengthen ECOWAS's Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action and to develop programs focusing on child trafficking as it pertains to the Strategic Plan.(56, 57) The USDOL-funded global 4.5-year, \$6.7 million project worked with the Liberian Government to build national capacity to collect and analyze child labor data.(58) The Government also cooperated with a USDOL-funded \$1.4 million grant for research on forced labor in the rubber sector, which ended in March 2012.(59)

During the reporting period, the MOGD continued to support the National Children's Parliament which advocates for stronger laws to protect children and comprises children age 15 to 18.(14)

The Government participates in the UNODC West Africa Coast Initiative that aims to strengthen national capacities and cross-border cooperation to address organized crime, including human trafficking and drug trafficking.(43, 60) With support from IOM, the Government provided training to immigration and labor officials during the year, including on identification and provision of services to trafficking victims.(25, 33)

The Government of Liberia participates in the EU-funded, \$3.6 million Social Cash Transfer Program, being implemented by UNICEF that aims to provide 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 example, due to disability.(61) The program targets 5,000 households and each beneficiary household receives between \$10 and \$25 per month.(61) A 2010 assessment of the Program by the World Bank rated the Program's outcome as positive.(62)

During the reporting period, the Government of Liberia participated in the \$27.6 million UN Joint Program for Employment and Empowerment of Young Women and Men, which ended in December 2011 and aimed to foster decent employment for disadvantaged youth in the informal economy and agriculture.(13) The Program included a technical vocational education and training component.(63) The Government of Liberia participates in the USAID-funded, 4-year (ending September 2014) Educating and Protecting Vulnerable Children in Family Settings Project, which aims to enhance protection systems for vulnerable children, including improving access to primary education and health services.(64)

Liberia continues to participate in the World Bank-funded, \$40 million Fast Track Initiative Grant for Basic Education project that aims to improve primary education access and quality.(65, 66) Ending in June 2013, the project targets over 470,000 direct beneficiaries. The World Bank rated progress towards implementation of project goals as satisfactory for 2010, the last year a rating was given.(66) The Government also continues to participate in the World Bank-funded, \$11 million Community Empowerment Project that aims to improve infrastructure (including school construction) and economic opportunities for poor families, including through cash-for-work schemes.(67) The Project targeted over 17,000 beneficiaries. The Project ended in June 2011.(67) The Government of Liberia continued to implement the World Bank-funded, \$6 million Youth, Employment and Skills Project that aims to provide employment opportunities and training to youth.(68) The Project targets 49,500 direct beneficiaries and is scheduled to end in June 2013.(68)

The Government continued to implement the \$175 million multi-donor Liberia Agriculture Investment Program (2011-2015), which aims to enhance household livelihoods in the agriculture sector, by building linkages with markets and improving rural infrastructure, which may have a positive impact on exploitative child labor.(69) The Government participated in the USDA and USAID-funded Sustainable Tree Crops Program through 2011, which aimed to support cocoa farmers (through training and farmer field schools) and to improve cocoa production and income in the counties of Bong, Lofa and Nimba.(70)

During the reporting period, the Government of Liberia cooperated with UNHCR to establish camps and provide essential services to Ivorian refugees, including children.(71-73) The Government participated in a World Bank funded Emergency Food Support for Vulnerable Women and Children Project that provided school lunches to 310 schools in the

counties of Maryland, Grand Kru, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Sinoe, in Southeastern Liberia.(74)

The question of whether these education, social protection and livelihoods programs have had an impact on child labor has yet

to be assessed. In addition, despite government efforts, child labor continues to be a significant problem, which suggests there is an ongoing need to address child labor in Liberia including in the agriculture, mining and informal sectors.

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Pass the Decent Work Bill and implement the National Children's Act, which should include a hazardous labor list for children younger than age 18, and sufficiently strict penalties for engaging in exploitative child labor, in compliance with international standards.	2010, 2011
	Ensure that the law, potentially through the Decent Work Bill, includes provisions that protect children engaged in street work and domestic labor.	2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Fully fund child labor enforcement mechanisms and prosecution efforts, such as NACOMAL, WCPS, and the National Human Trafficking Task Force and provide necessary training for such officials, to enforce child labor laws.	2010, 2011
	Consistently collect and publish data on violations, investigations and prosecutions for child labor and child trafficking.	2010, 2011
	Systematically implement and monitor implementation of occupational safety and health guidelines on rubber plantations through the Rubber Task Force.	2011
Policies	Collect (such as through national child labor surveys) and publish data on child labor and child trafficking, to inform enforcement efforts and policies.	2010, 2011
	Formally adopt and implement the National Youth Policy for Liberia.	2010, 2011
	Assess the impact that existing child protection, livelihoods and education policies may have on addressing child labor.	2010, 2011
Social Programs	Assess and evaluate the impact that existing education, social protection and livelihoods programs may have on addressing child labor.	2010, 2011
	Increase the scope of existing social programs to reach more children at risk of and engaged in the worst forms of child labor	2009, 2010, 2011

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