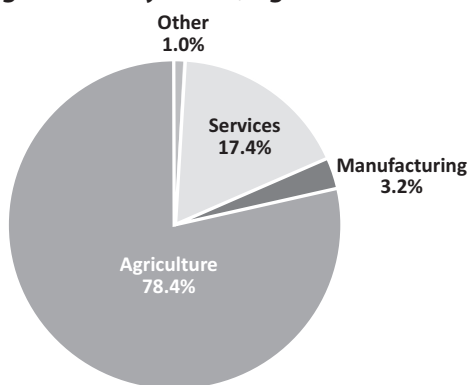


In 2012, Liberia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government adopted the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, raised awareness on its Child Rights Act, conducted police raids on institutions suspected of engaging in commercial sexual exploitation of children and expanded commitments to social programs. However, the Government has yet to pass into law the Decent Work Bill, including a hazardous labor list, and enforcement efforts are still lacking. Children in Liberia continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in dangerous activities in the agriculture and mining sectors.

### Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	16.6 (136,340)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	75.9
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	14.0
Primary Completion Rate		66.0

### Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



#### Sources:

**Primary completion rate:** Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

**All other data:** Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from LFS, 2010.(2)

### Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Liberia are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly 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.(3-7) On some rubber



plantations, children are employed to tap rubber trees, clear brush, and carry buckets, which are considered dangerous activities.(3, 8, 9)

Children are engaged in mining natural resources, and although information is limited, it suggests that some children mine alluvial diamonds.(3, 9-11) Some children are known to mine gold, engaging in dangerous activities such as digging trenches with shovels and pick axes and washing gravel. Reports suggest that some children are also engaged in quarrying and stone cutting and crushing, though the full scope of the problem is unknown.(3, 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, and construction workers (which may involve breaking rocks and digging sand), which involve transporting heavy loads.(11, 12, 16-21) Some children are forced to beg and engage in illicit activities, such as selling drugs or commercial sexual exploitation.(11, 22) In the domestic service sector, children commonly work long hours and are exposed to exploitative conditions.(11-13, 16) These children may be required to work long hours, performing strenuous tasks, without sufficient food or shelter. These children may be isolated in private homes and are susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(23, 24)

In 2012, limited reports indicate that children within Liberia were recruited from border regions by pro-Gbagbo armed rebel groups for armed conflict in cross-border raids between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.(25, 26)

# Liberia

Children are trafficked within Liberia for domestic service and exploitative labor.(27-29) Children are also trafficked to Liberia from Sierra Leone, as well as being trafficked from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Nigeria for domestic service, street vending, sexual exploitation, agricultural labor, and forced begging.(29) In addition, 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)

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 the level of destruction and budgetary and resource constraints, the school 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 the worst forms of child labor.(29, 31, 32) Furthermore, sexual abuse by male teachers in schools is reported as a barrier to girls' education.(33, 34)

There are reports of children working on the streets, but specific information on hazards is unknown.(11, 22)

## 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.(35) 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.(35) 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.(8, 35) The Labor Law does not include any penalties for violations of its child labor laws, which inhibits prosecution.(12, 35) However, at times, perpetrators can be prosecuted under the Penal Law's child endangerment provision.(36)

The 2011 National Children's Act prohibits the worst forms of child labor—including engaging children in illicit activities, prostitution, pornography, and armed conflict—and protects children from (non-specified) hazardous activities.(12, 22, 29, 37) During the reporting period, the Government disseminated and raised awareness on the provisions of the Act.(11) Additionally, the Decent Work Bill is still pending in front of the Senate.(38) The Bill would provide additional protections for children, including a hazardous

labor list.(11) However, the Bill's list of hazardous labor is not comprehensive and does not include all activities that are prohibited to children younger than age 18.(39)

## 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	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	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia prohibits forced labor, bonded labor, and slavery.(12, 40) 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, 41) 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.(42, 43) 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.(44)

The Education Reform Act of 2011 increased 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.(13) However, in practice, many children still pay school fees to attend school, which may prevent some children from attending school.(13)

During the reporting period, the Government also adopted the International Convention on the Rights of a Child.(32) In addition, the African Union Convention for the Protection

and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the “Kampala Convention”) came into force in Liberia. The Kampala Convention prohibits the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, as well as the trafficking, abduction, and forced labor of women and children.(45, 46)

### **Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination 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.(11, 47) The objectives of NACOMAL include reforming national child labor laws and designing a national child labor database.(13, 47) 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, civil society organizations and several NGO’s.(11) The Child Protection Network also is responsible for coordinating referrals for provision of services to child victims, and receives support from international and national organizations in doing so.(13, 48) 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.(13)

NACOMAL and other ministries generally perform preliminary investigations on exploitative child labor cases.(43) Child labor cases requiring further investigation or possible prosecution are referred to WCPS. WCPS has approximately 217 investigators.(11) During the reporting period, the Government performed a number of raids on institutions suspected of being brothels engaged in commercial sexual exploitation of children.(49-51) As of February 2013, the outcome of the raids is unknown.(12) In 2012, WCPS processed 54 cases of child endangerment, some of which were child labor cases. Though, none of the child labor cases were prosecuted, and no additional information on the number of child labor prosecutions was available at the time of writing.(11) 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.(11, 29, 43, 52)

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, such as the Liberian Transnational Crime Unit, which receives support from UNODC.(53) 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.(53) There is also a new Anti-Trafficking Bureau set up within the WCPS of the LNP. It is composed of 4 officers who are being mentored by Swedish UNPOL advisors for the next year.(53)

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 Anti-Trafficking Task Force, which is chaired by the Ministry of Labor and includes the Commissioner of BIN, the Liberia National Police, and representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Internal Affairs.(54) During the year, the Government of Liberia reports making an arrest of a child trafficker who subsequently escaped captivity.(36, 55) Reports suggest that the Government did not collect or publish information on exploitative child labor during the reporting period.(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, as well as 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, 43, 56) The Government is currently designing a National Action Plan under the Anti-Trafficking Law.

During the reporting period, the Governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia signed a joint agreement to curb illegal cross-border activities between their two countries, such as human

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trafficking and illicit mining.(57) No additional information is available about the Plan or the Agreement at the time of writing.

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.(58) The Framework promotes youth empowerment and improving access to quality education.(58) The Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2011), still relevant during the reporting period, recognizes the link between household income and child labor and highlights the importance of protecting children from physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.(59)

Liberia's National Social Welfare Policy prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that target children engaged in exploitive labor and child trafficking.(60) The Government has a National Employment Policy that aims to provide vocational training for youth.(61) The Liberian National Youth Policy of 2008 and revamped in 2012 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.(62) However, the National Youth Policy for Liberia has not been formally adopted as of the writing of this report and its status is unclear.(43) 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.(63) 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.(64)

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 the access to and quality of primary education.(65) The Ministry of Education has a 5-year Plan (2010-2014) to provide education to vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS.(66) During the reporting period, the President also endorsed the New Deal Trust policy that commits the Government of Liberia to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its key ministries, such as the Ministries of Finance, Health, and Education.(67) In addition, in the new 2030 Vision policy document (2012-2017), the

Government of Liberia outlines its goal to become a middle income country by 2030, by increasing focus on education and livelihoods.(68, 69)

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.(43)

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

During the reporting period, President Sirleaf spoke out against child labor and extolled the benefits of education.(70) The President passed a 2012 fiscal year National Budget of an estimated \$672 million; of this amount, \$69 million was allocated for education and an additional \$20 million was allocated for youth development.(71, 72) In addition, the Government continued to implement the \$175 million, multi-donor funded 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 reducing exploitative child labor.(73)

The Government of Liberia started participating in the USDOL-funded, 4-year, \$6 million project to combat child labor in the rubber sector.(74) The project aims to withdraw and prevent 10,100 children from engaging in the worst forms of child labor by providing education, as well as providing livelihoods support to 3,700 vulnerable families. The project is implemented in collaboration with local rubber industries.(74) 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.(75) The Government of Liberia participated in two regional USDOL-funded projects, including a 4-year, \$7.95 million regional project and a 3-year, \$5 million regional project, both of which assisted ECOWAS member countries in strengthening regional efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. In 2012, with the assistance of the two regional projects, ECOWAS developed a draft Regional Plan of Action for the elimination of child labor.(76, 77) In addition to the two regional projects, USDOL funded a global, 4.5-year, \$6.7 million project worked with the Liberian Government to build national capacity to collect and analyze child labor data.(78) The Government also continued to participate in the USDOL-funded, 4-year Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project, which is active in approximately 40 countries. In Liberia, the project aims to build the capacity of the national government and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor and forced labor.(79)

Save the Children, with participation of the Government of Liberia, supported a drop-in center in Monrovia, which provide street children with safe-haven and services.(80) The Government supported microcredit activities by the Ministry of Information, Culture Affairs, and Tourism, providing \$2.7 million in funds as loan guarantees for small businesses, which can increase livelihoods and decrease dependence on child labor.(81) The Government of Germany also pledged funds to support Government efforts to build national police capacity and build schools.(82)

The Government continued to participate 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.(53, 83) 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.(29, 84)

The Government of Liberia participates in the EU-funded, \$3.1 million Social Cash Transfer Program, which 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 reasons such as disability.(85) The program targets 5,000 households, and each beneficiary household receives between \$10 and \$25 per month.(85) 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.(86)

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.(87, 88) The Government participated in a project funded by Sahbu, an NGO, that provided educational scholarships to children.(89) Ending in June 2013, the project targets over 470,000 direct beneficiaries. 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.(90) The Project targets 49,500 direct beneficiaries and is scheduled to end in June 2013.(90)

During the reporting period, the Government participated in numerous food security, agriculture and livelihood improvement programs, which can decrease household dependency on child labor. For example, the Government participated in the USDA and USAID-funded Sustainable Tree Crops Program, 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.(91) The International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Government of Liberia also signed a loan agreement during the reporting period for \$25 million to improve food security for 300,000 households under the Smallholder Tree Crop Project.(92) In addition, the Government signed for a \$15 million credit from the World Bank to increase access to finance, technologies, and markets for smallholder tree crop farmers.(93) During the reporting period, the Governments of Liberia and Japan signed a food aid agreement worth \$8.5 million that aims to build livelihoods and increase food security in the rice sector in 15 countries.(94) The Government also participates in a U.S. Government-funded, \$75 million Feed the Future Project that aims to improve the food security and nutrition among vulnerable populations.(95)

During the reporting period, the Government of Liberia continued to cooperate with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to establish camps and provide essential services to Ivorian refugees, including children.(96-100) 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.(101) In addition, the Government of Liberia took a number of steps, such as increasing refugee camps security and apprehending suspects, to address the issue of child soldier recruitment by cross-border rebel groups from Côte d'Ivoire.(26, 102) As of February 2013, reports conflict as to whether or not the Government's steps were sufficient to address the issue.(26, 103, 104)

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, the worst forms of child labor continue to be a significant problem. Current social programs do not match the scope of the problem.

# Liberia

**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 law, potentially the Decent Work Bill, which includes 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, 2012
	Ensure that the law, potentially through the new Labor Law, includes provisions that protect children engaged in street work and domestic labor.	2011, 2012
	Implement legal provisions that provide for free education.	2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Fully fund child labor enforcement mechanisms and prosecution efforts, such as NACOMAL, WCPS, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force and provide necessary training for such officials, to enforce child labor laws.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Consistently collect and publish data on violations, citations, investigations, and prosecutions for child labor and child trafficking.	2010, 2011, 2012
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, 2012
	Formally adopt and implement the National Youth Policy for Liberia.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Assess the impact that existing child protection, livelihoods and education policies may have on addressing child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
Social Programs	Assess and evaluate the impact that existing education, social protection, and livelihoods programs may have on addressing child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
	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, 2012

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