

In 2013, Uzbekistan made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Notwithstanding initiatives to reduce child labor, Uzbekistan has received this assessment based on the Government's continued complicity in the use of forced child labor. The national Government maintained policies in the cotton sector, which mandate harvest quotas and cause local administrators to organize and impose forced labor on children and adults. Although the Government continues to publicly deny the use of forced labor, including of children, in the cotton harvest, information indicates that children continue to be required to engage in the worst forms of child labor in cotton production. The Government invited an ILO high level-mission to observe the fall 2013 harvest, and reports indicate that the Government did ensure that young children (under age 15) were able to continue to attend school during the harvest season. However, local government officials continued to close secondary schools (colleges and lyceums) during the harvest, mobilizing children ages 15 to 17 to pick cotton to meet the Government-mandated harvest quotas.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

There is a lack of current data on child labor in Uzbekistan; to date, the Government has not conducted a national survey on child labor, and a credible and comprehensive national mechanism to monitor child labor, including during the fall harvest period, does not exist. However, evidence shows that children under age 18 continue to be forced to work during the annual cotton harvest, due to a governmental system that requires local administrators and farmers to meet cotton harvest quotas.(1-10) In addition, each spring, during the pre-harvest season, there are reports that some children also work long hours sowing cotton, followed by weeding through the summer months.(5, 11-13) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Uzbekistan.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	4.3 (244,095)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	84.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	5.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		91.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(14)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006.(15)

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	Sowing, weeding, and harvesting of cotton† (2, 5, 9, 12)
	Cultivating and harvesting of silkworms* (16-18)
Services	Street vending and street begging (19-21)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8, 22)
	Forced labor in sowing, weeding, and harvesting of cotton (2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 23-26)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a) – (c) of ILO C. 182.

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In 2013, the Government, along with local administrators, continued its efforts to keep primary-level students (under age 15) in school and out of the fields during the cotton harvest. Sources indicate that most primary school students were not mobilized by local authorities for the 2013 harvest.(3, 4, 27) However, NGO and U.S. Embassy reports indicate that there were isolated incidents of children as young as 10 working in the cotton fields.(4, 21, 27) The 2013 ILO monitoring mission found 53 children ages 16 and 17 picking cotton and did not verify a single case of children under 15.(9)

Sources indicate that local administrators continued to close secondary schools (colleges and lyceums) during the harvest and forced children ages 15 to 17 to pick cotton to reach the quotas mandated by the national Government. Evidence suggests that the harvest quotas were between 66 and 155 pounds per day for older children.(2, 4, 10, 21, 27, 28)




Children forced to work in the cotton harvest miss weeks of school every year, which may negatively impact their learning.(6, 7, 29) There were NGO reports that students who refused to participate in the cotton harvest were threatened with physical abuse, low grades, or expulsion; and their parents were threatened by local authorities.(2, 6, 7, 23-26)

While not a policy of the Government, children are also trafficked internally and abroad, primarily to destinations across Asia, for commercial sexual exploitation.(8, 22)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Uzbekistan has ratified all 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	Article 77 of the Labor Code; Law on the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child (21, 30, 31)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Labor Code (29)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	Yes		Decree on Adoption of the List of Occupations with Unfavorable Working Conditions to Which it is Forbidden to Employ Persons under Eighteen Years of Age; Decree on Approval of Provision on Requirements on Prohibition of Use of Minors' Labor (32, 33)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Constitution; Article 7 of the Labor Code (29, 30, 34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Law on the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child (31)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Law on the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child; Criminal Code (31, 35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Law on the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child (31)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Law on Universal Military Service (36)
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Law on Universal Military Service (36, 37)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Law on Education (38)
Free Public Education	Yes		Law on Education (38)

The Labor Code of Uzbekistan and the Law on the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child, as amended in 2009, establish the minimum age for work at 16 and the minimum age for part-time light work with parental consent at 15.(21, 30, 31) The Labor Code also prohibits hazardous labor for children under age 18.(29)

The Decree on Adoption of the List of Occupations with Unfavorable Working Conditions to Which it is Forbidden to Employ Persons under Eighteen Years of Age presents a list of hazardous activities forbidden for children younger than age 18.(21, 29, 33) This List specifically includes the manual harvesting of cotton. The Decree on Approval of Provision on Requirements on Prohibition of Use of Minors' Labor further bars employers from using children to work under specific hazardous conditions. These include working underground, underwater, at dangerous heights, or with dangerous equipment, or doing work that requires lifting or moving heavy loads.(21, 32) This Decree also grants authority to parents and labor inspectors to cancel the employment contracts of workers younger than age 18 if the work involved could endanger the child's health or well-being.(32)

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 Labor	Conduct labor inspections, including inspections for compliance with child labor laws.(21, 39)
Ministry of Interior Office for Combating Trafficking	Investigate criminal violations involving the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.(22) Investigate crimes related to trafficking in persons, which may then be prosecuted by the Prosecutor General's office.(22)
Prosecutor General's Office	Prosecute criminal violations involving the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.(22)
Ministry of Secondary Education and the Ministry of Higher Education's Center and Secondary Specialized and Professional Education	Monitor elementary through secondary students to prevent forced child labor.(40)
Coordination Council	Monitor all forms of child labor.(41) Comprises representatives from the Ministries of Labor and Social Protection, Education, Foreign Affairs, and Internal Affairs, the Women's Committee, the Center on Human Rights, the Board of Secondary and Vocational Education, and NGOs.(9)
Women's Committee of Uzbekistan	Monitor school attendance through the academic year, especially during the cotton harvest. A total of 14 regional and 194 district branches of the Women's Committee involved in monitoring school attendance.(41)

Law enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

The Ministry of Labor employs a total of 296 labor inspectors. These inspectors received two trainings on child labor during the reporting period.(28, 41) Information was not available regarding the number of inspections the Government carried out in 2013.(28)

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Law enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan took certain actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms, during the reporting period. For example, there is evidence that in 2013, local administrators formed child labor monitoring teams to prevent children under age 15 from working in the cotton harvest.(28) However, it is not known whether these local monitoring mechanisms were established in all cotton growing areas.

As previously noted, the Government invited an ILO high-level mission to observe the fall 2013 cotton harvest and to assess the use of child labor in the harvest.(9) The monitoring mission took place from September 11 through October 31, 2013; it included eight monitoring units responsible for monitoring eight zones, which covered all cotton-producing areas of Uzbekistan. Each monitoring unit was led by one international coordinator and consisted of six members, including government representatives.(9) The monitors reported that there were six closed colleges in two zones, and significant absenteeism in colleges in four zones. The ILO mission noted that in one zone a higher level of school absenteeism coincided with the relatively large number of children found picking cotton in that zone.(9) The ILO monitors also observed that school records were not maintained sufficiently across zones and that the districts' lists of cotton pickers, including information on their age, may not have been kept current throughout the harvest season.(9)

The monitoring mission identified 53 children, ages 16 and 17, who were working in the cotton fields during the harvest in violation of Uzbekistan's labor laws.(9) It was noted that this number may have been an underestimate as the ages could not be verified for some additional individuals found working in the cotton fields who may have been under the age of 18.(9, 21) Monitors found regional disparities in the awareness, implementation, and enforcement of Uzbekistan's labor laws, which resulted in specific cases of child labor.(9)

As a result of these violations, the Government and the ILO reported that warnings or fines were issued to responsible persons at eight educational institutions, and to farmers in two districts. The Government also reported that three warnings were given in response to these violations.(9, 41) Outside of the cases identified during the ILO monitoring mission, there were no other reported sanctions or prosecutions against those responsible for engaging children to work in the cotton harvest or in any form of child labor.(21)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2013, the Government investigated 1,013 criminal human trafficking cases that involved 71 child victims.(41) The Government prosecuted 517 human trafficking cases.(41) Information was unavailable on the number of convictions. The Government provided medical, psychological, and social assistance to 1,392 trafficking victims, which included 31 child victims.(41)

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
Coordination Council†	Coordinate efforts to address child labor issues and provide support to the ILO cotton harvest monitoring mission.(9)
Interagency Working Group	Coordinate efforts to address labor rights issues, including child labor.(39, 42, 43) Report to the ILO on the Government's implementation of ratified conventions, prevent forced labor, and protect working minors.(40, 42-45)
Interagency Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons	Oversee efforts to combat trafficking.(20, 22) Chaired by the Prosecutor General and includes representatives from other government entities, such as the Ministries of Labor and Social Protection, Interior, and Foreign Affairs, the National Security Service, and the State Customs Committee.(22)
Local interagency committees	Monitor human trafficking at the provincial, regional, and municipal levels.(22)

† Coordination effort was launched during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Uzbekistan 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 the Application of ILO Conventions (NAP)	Includes a National Policy on child labor issues.(21, 45, 46)
Decree on Additional Measures	Establishes actions and efforts to be taken to address the worst forms of child labor. (46) Outlines additional activities to be implemented in 2012–2013 in response to ILO Convention requirements, including awareness-raising, monitoring of the cotton harvest, and activities on the worst forms of child labor targeting government ministries, international organizations, students, parents, and employers.(45-47)
National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons 2013–2014	Specifies actions for law enforcement bodies, ministries, agencies, and NGOs to take to combat human trafficking.(48)
Education Sector Plan 2013– 2017*	Defines the 5-year development for the education sector and aims to ensure equal opportunities and quality education for all.(49)

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

The national Government maintained policies in the cotton sector, which mandate harvest quotas and offer strong incentives for local administrators to organize and impose forced labor on children and adults.(3, 4, 50) Reports indicate that in 2013, the Government of Uzbekistan continued to enforce a 2012 Prime Ministerial Decree (an internal communication that has not been made public) prohibiting the mobilization of children in primary school under age 15 to harvest cotton.(8, 21) However, the decree does not include protections for children ages 15 to 17 from the worst forms of child labor.(8, 27)

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

While the Government of Uzbekistan funded programs that address human trafficking in 2013, there is no evidence of national programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing other types of child labor. However, as described in Table 8, the Government has other social programs that may have an impact on child labor, including its worst forms.

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
School Assistance*‡	Ministry of Education program that provides winter clothes and other educational resources to needy families to support their school attendance.(51) During the reporting period, 563,191 students from underprivileged families received winter clothing and 535,631 first-grade students received free text books.(41)
Family Support Assistance*‡	Government of Uzbekistan program that provides an allowance to low-income families. Allowance continues to be paid to the family if their children continue their education up to the age of 18.(51)
Child Protection Assistance*	UNICEF program that engages with the Government of Uzbekistan to support the development of a national child protection system that will prevent and respond to children who are at risk of or have been subject to child abuse, exploitation, and violence.(52)
Shelter Support‡	Ministry of Labor operates a shelter for trafficking victims and provides them with medical, psychological, legal, and vocational training. Government provides shelter and office space to two NGO-run shelters.(10)
Awareness-raising†‡	Government supports broadcasts to raise awareness on labor trafficking. During the reporting period, the Government generated awareness on labor trafficking through print and television media, and on billboards in all major cities and transportation hubs.(10) In 2013, in the context of the monitoring mission, the ILO carried out awareness-raising and conducted over twenty training seminars across Uzbekistan on international labor standards.(9)
Human Trafficking Hotlines‡	Ministry of Labor operates several hotlines to report incidents of trafficking.(22)
Labor Hotlines	Trade unions operate hotlines for workers to report labor violations.(41)
Cotton Picking Machine Provisions*	Government program that provides farmers with cotton picking machines to help reduce the need for human cotton pickers. Provided farmers with 400 cotton-picking machines in 2013.(41)

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

† Program was launched during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Uzbekistan

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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 Uzbekistan (Table 9).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strictly enforce legislation that prohibits the worst forms of child labor in the cotton harvest for all children until age 18.	2009 – 2013
	Target labor and criminal inspections in areas where hazardous child labor is known to occur, especially in the cotton sector.	2011 – 2013
	Establish a comprehensive cotton harvest monitoring system and expand community child labor monitoring teams to all cotton-growing areas.	2012 – 2013
	Implement recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies, including seeking ILO technical assistance and continuing to work with the ILO or other credible third parties to observe cotton harvests.	2009 – 2013
	Publish information on criminal investigations and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor and trafficking of children.	2011 – 2013
	Strengthen recordkeeping in educational institutions and maintain up to date records of cotton workers' age on district lists.	2013
	Apply sanction against individuals responsible for closing schools and mobilizing children under age 18 to work in the cotton harvest, and those responsible for engaging children in other forms of child labor.	2013
Government Policies	Initiate a policy that forbids the practice of closing schools and mobilizing children under age 18 to work in the cotton harvest.	2011 – 2013
	Revise policies that mandate cotton harvest quotas to prohibit the forced involvement of all children under age 18 in the cotton harvest.	2012 – 2013
	Publish and make publicly available official decrees regarding child labor policies, including internal communications prohibiting the closure of schools and the mobilization of children under age 18 for the cotton harvest.	2012 – 2013
Social Programs	Conduct a national child labor survey.	2013
	Expand programs to address the worst forms of child labor, with a particular focus on children involved in sowing, weeding, and harvesting cotton.	2009 – 2013
	Assess the impact that school assistance and family support programs may have on addressing child labor.	2011 – 2013

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