

In 2014, Ethiopia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Ethiopia ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The Government also made a number of efforts to improve labor law enforcement, and participated in and implemented several programs, including the launching of a large-scale education improvement project, to combat the worst forms of child labor. However, children in Ethiopia are engaged in child labor including in agriculture and in the worst forms of child labor, including in domestic work. Ethiopia still lacks a compulsory education law which leaves children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Social programs to combat child labor have not sufficiently targeted sectors with a high incidence of child labor.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Ethiopia are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture. Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in domestic work.(1, 2) Data from the Government's 2011 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) show that most children work for a family business. In addition, DHS data indicate that the percentages of child labor are higher among males and in rural areas.(3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ethiopia.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	22.0 (5,545,319)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	54.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	17.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		47.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2006, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(4)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2011.(5)

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	Planting and harvesting apples,* coffee,* cotton,* onions,* bananas,* flowers,* sugarcane,* and tea* (6-14)
	Herding cattle (11, 12, 14, 15)
	Fishing,*† activities unknown (11-13, 16, 17)
Industry	Mining† gold (10, 17)
	Quarrying*† and working at stone-crusher plants*† (11, 16)
	Construction*† and manufacturing,* activities unknown (11-13, 17, 18)
	Making pottery products* (11, 19)
Services	Traditional weaving of handwoven textiles (11, 12, 20-22)
	Domestic work† (17, 18, 21)
	Unpaid household services, including carrying heavy loads of water* (11, 23)

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**Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work,† including as shoe shiners, assistants to taxi drivers,* vendors, porters,* and beggars (11-14, 17, 24-28)
	Garbage scavenging (29)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (17, 18, 30-32)
	Domestic work, herding, street vending, and traditional weaving of hand-woven textiles, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (11, 33-36)

\* 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.




In Ethiopia, children work in the traditional weaving industry in Addis Ababa and in the Gamo Gofa and Wolayita Zones.(11, 12, 20-22) Anecdotal evidence suggests that some child weavers are held in debt bondage.(35, 37) In addition, children are trafficked from rural areas to Addis Ababa and to other regions of the country for forced labor in the weaving industry.(11, 33, 36) The Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions reports an increase in child labor in the construction industry in recent years.(18)

Although the Government has improved access to education, the lack of adequate schools in rural areas increases children’s risk of entering the workforce at a young age.(17, 38-40) In addition, although primary education is free, the cost of school supplies keeps some children from attending school.(1, 10) Droughts and floods also hindered access to education in Afar; Amhara; Benishangul-Gumuz; Dire Dawa; Gambella; Harar; Oromia; Somali Region; Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR); and Tigray.(28, 41) In SNNPR, the sexual abuse and harassment of girls is also a barrier to education.(40) Although the Vital Events Registration Proclamation mandates the registration of all births, many children in Ethiopia are not registered. Unable to prove their citizenship, nonregistered children may have difficulty accessing services such as education.(21, 42-45) In 2013, the Government established the Vital Events Registration Agency to assist with the registration of births. The rollout of the Proclamation has been delayed by the absence of uniform national identification cards.(36, 44, 46)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Ethiopia 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	✓

During the reporting period, the Government ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.(47, 48)

The Government has established 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	14	Article 89(2) of the Labor Proclamation (49)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 89(1) and 89(3) of the Labor Proclamation (49)

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

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Article 89(4) of the Labor Proclamation; Activities Prohibited for Young Workers Directive (49-51)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 18(3) of the Constitution (52)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 18(2) of the Constitution; Articles 597, 635, and 637 of the Criminal Code; local bylaws (52-54)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 634 of the Criminal Code (53, 54)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 525 of the Criminal Code (53)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 270 of the Criminal Code (53)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

\* No conscription (53)

Ethiopian law is not completely consistent with international standards regarding child labor. Article 89(5) of the Labor Proclamation allows children ages 14 to 16 to engage in certain forms of hazardous work if this work is performed following a government-approved vocational training course.(49, 55) The minimum age provisions of the law do not apply to children working outside of a contractual employment relationship. (2, 55, 56) In addition, the penalties outlined in article 184 of the Labor Proclamation for violating child labor laws are low and do not generally deter violations.(49, 57)

There is no law establishing compulsory education in Ethiopia. The lack of compulsory education may increase the risk of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor, as they are not legally required to be in school.(18, 55)

### 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 and Social Affairs (MOLSA)/Occupational Safety and Health Case Team (OSHCT)	Enforce occupational safety, health, and wage and hour protections, which include child labor laws, at industrial enterprises in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.(54, 58) Collect and analyze data and make policymaking recommendations for labor purposes. The Occupational Safety and Health Case Team (OSHCT) is located within Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA).(14, 58, 59)
Regional Bureaus of Social and Labor Affairs (BOLSAs) and City Administration	Conduct labor inspections at the zonal offices, and at the regional and city levels.(57) In the case of the BOLSA office in Addis Ababa, operate an occupational safety and health laboratory to identify workplace hazards.(43)
Ethiopian Federal Police and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Investigate and prosecute criminal violations of laws that protect against the worst forms of child labor.(10, 18) In the case of police stations at the regional level, employ a trained child protection officer, and employ Child Protection Units for the 10 subcity-level police stations in Addis Ababa.(31)
The Human Trafficking and Narcotics Section	Collaborate with the prosecutor's office to conduct investigations, prosecute offenders, and report and collect trafficking data. Located in the Organized Crime Investigation Unit of the Federal Police.(10, 18, 36)

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

#### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2014, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) employed 382 labor inspectors. The increase from 291 in 2013 returns the level of inspectors to 2012 levels, but the high turnover of inspectors is common due to better-paying jobs in the

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private sector.(2, 57) In response, MOLSA raised inspectors' salaries in 2014 by between 31 and 42 percent.(2) During the year, 35 professional trainers were trained to provide training to labor inspectors, including a component on child labor. In addition, 135 new labor inspectors were trained, including on how to bring cases to court.(2) In July of 2014, MOLSA issued a National Labor Safety, Health Policy and Strategy to enhance enforcement efforts.(2) Funding, facilities, and equipment were reported to be insufficient.(18)

During the year, MOLSA conducted 37,500 labor inspections, 14 of which were complaint based inspections.(60) However, the information on the number of labor inspections was not published publicly. (2) MOLSA does not disaggregate child labor data, and research found no information on the number of child labor law violations found, including in what industries or types of employment, or whether the violations were remedied; what type of referral mechanisms were in place; how many citations were issued; or whether appropriate penalties were applied.(18, 59) Labor inspectors do not have the authority to directly impose penalties. Inspectors, therefore, advise employers on compliance issues.(57)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

In 2014, a total of 456 checkpoint police officers were trained on child labor, identifying and investigating human trafficking, and referring to relevant agencies.(2, 61) Information for the reporting period was not available on the number and training of Ethiopian Federal Police Human Trafficking investigators or the type and quality of criminal investigations. In 2014, the Human Trafficking and Narcotics Section identified 99 cases of human trafficking, although it is unclear how many involved children. Of these, 93 cases were prosecuted pertaining to 118 suspected offenders.(61, 62) Federal courts secured 46 convictions for trafficking in persons in 35 cases. In addition, the Ethiopian Federal Police investigated 10 cases of child labor, and it arrested and transferred a total of 13 suspected offenders to prosecutors.(60, 62). During the year, 139 judges were trained on child labor issues.(2, 61) It is reported that police departments and district officials refer victims of the worst forms of child labor to NGO-run shelters and government orphanages.(33) During the year, the Wolayita and Gamo Gofa zones prevented 563 children from being trafficked.(2) The Federal Police also reported that it routinely intercepted children along the borders during the reporting period.(2, 31) Courts in the SNNPR sentenced 21 people for trafficking children, resulting in prison sentences ranging from two to seven years.(2) Although the Government attained prosecutions and convictions of transnational human trafficking during the year, there are low prosecution and conviction rates for the internal trafficking of children for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.(36, 61)

## 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 Steering Committee on the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Coordinate activities on the worst forms of child labor. Includes members from MOLSA; the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs (MOWYCA); and the Ministry of Education.(18)
MOLSA's Deputy Minister Forum	Combat the worst forms of child labor at the national level. Meets on a monthly basis and includes participants from the Ethiopian Employers' Federation and Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions.(18)
MOLSA child labor desk	Coordinate efforts between MOLSA and MOWYCA on child labor issues.(14, 43, 63)
National Steering Committee against Sexual Exploitation of Children	Develop action plans and coordinate activities against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.(38)
National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons	Address international exploitation, including the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and composed of all federal ministers and regional presidents.(18, 31, 61) Meets twice per year.(61)
National Human Trafficking Task Force	Develop action plans and coordinate activities against trafficking in persons on a quarterly basis. (33, 64) Chaired by the State Minister of Administration, Justice Planning, and Implementation and includes representation by deputy state ministers. In 2014, conducted monitoring trips to four primary regions of origin of victims of human trafficking.(61)
Regional Technical Working Groups on Trafficking	Identify trends and areas in need of public awareness campaigns on human trafficking. Meets on a weekly basis and includes officials from regional federal ministries and agencies.(31, 33, 36)

**Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (cont)**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Child Protection Committees, Child Rights Clubs, and Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Task Forces	Promote children's rights; provide children with food and school supplies; and train members on child labor issues, case management, international child labor standards, and Ethiopian child labor laws. Composed of children, police, health workers, and teachers.(12, 14, 65, 66)

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Ethiopia 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 to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2013-2015)	Includes guidelines on child labor identification, withdrawal, reintegration, and educational policies. Available in Amharic.(14, 43, 67) In 2014, 118 participants from the federal parliament, federal agencies, and regional governments attended a training on the implementation of the National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor.(68)
Protocols and Guidelines for Identification, Withdrawal, Rehabilitation, and Integration of Victims of the Worst forms of Child Labor in Solid Waste Management and the Traditional Weaving Sector (2010)	Describes the work conditions of children engaged in garbage scavenging and in the traditional weaving sector; includes guidelines for stakeholders to implement interventions.(29, 69)
National Labor Safety, Health Policy and Strategy†	Seeks to abolish child labor and ensure that working conditions for youth, women, and disabled workers are improved.(2)
Social Protection Policy (2014)†	Aims to improve the quality of, and access to, basic education and health services; includes child labor concerns.(60, 70)
National Youth Policy (2005)	Addresses the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and illicit work.(71)
National Employment Policy and Strategy of Ethiopia (2009)	Describes the root causes of child labor in Ethiopia and lists interventions that may be used to combat child labor, including income-generating activities and awareness raising.(72)
UNDAF (2012-2015)	Promotes improved access to education and livelihood services for vulnerable children; seeks to protect children from abuse, violence, and exploitation; and seeks to withdraw children from child labor and rehabilitate them.(73)
Standard Service Delivery Guidelines for Orphans and Vulnerable Children's Care (2010)	Identifies that OVCs are at increased risk of exploitative child labor and includes the goal of keeping children in school.(74)
National Human Rights Action Plan (2013-2015)	Aims to strengthen the implementation of human rights in Ethiopia, including by making efforts to eliminate exploitative child labor.(75-77)
National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (2010)*	Supports early education programs for children and community-based non-formal school readiness programs.(78, 79)
Growth and Transformation Plan (2010-2015)*	Calls for the expansion of education services and outlines interventions to provide greater opportunities for vulnerable households to engage in decent work.(80)
Education and Training Policy (1994) *	Provides free education through secondary education.(81)
National Technical Vocational Education and Training Strategy (2008)*	Aims to increase employment opportunities for school dropouts and youth without formal education through technology and skills training.(50, 82)
General Education Quality Assurance Package (2008)*	Seeks to improve the quality of general education through curriculum development, textbook assessment, teacher training, and school construction throughout Ethiopia.(83)

\* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

The National Youth Policy does not have a budget or detailed action plan related to the worst forms of child labor.(54, 71) In addition, the National Child Policy and National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which were drafted to protect the rights of children, have not yet been adopted.(61, 63, 84)

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### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Ethiopia funded and 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
Child-Labor-Free Zones	Government program that pilots child-labor-free zones in the cities of Addis Ababa and Adama, in collaboration with the Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment. Child protection officers, labor inspectors, police officers, and other stakeholders support this initiative by reintegrating child laborers.(14).
Ethiopians Fighting Against Child Exploitation (2011-2015)	\$10 million USDOL-funded, 4-year project implemented by World Vision that targets 20,000 children engaged in or at risk of entering exploitative child labor, particularly in the traditional weaving industry and in rural areas.(12) Assists 7,000 households of targeted children to promote sustainable livelihoods, and collaborates with MOLSA to coordinate the provision of services and provide occupational safety and health training to labor inspectors. Operates primarily in Addis Ababa and in the Gamo Gofa and Wolayita Zones.(12) In 2014, the program raised public awareness of the worst forms of child labor through radio programming, television broadcasts and illustrated brochures.(60)
Engaged, Educated, Empowered, Ethiopian Youth Project (2014-2018)	\$10 million USDOL-funded, 4-year project implemented by World Vision that targets 12,000 male and female youth both in and out of school who are between ages 14 and 17 and engaged in or at risk of entering exploitative child labor.(85) Assists 7,500 households of targeted youth to promote sustainable livelihoods, increase access to education and decent work opportunities. Operates primarily in the SNNPR and Amhara Regions.(85)
Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project (2011-2016)	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 Government and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor in Ethiopia.(86)
Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development (MAP) (2013-2017)	USDOL-funded research project implemented by the ILO in 10 countries, including Ethiopia, to increase the knowledge base around child labor by collecting new data, analyzing existing data, and building capacity to conduct research in this area.(87) Aims to conduct a national child labor survey in Ethiopia.(87)
Child Labor Awareness Raising‡	MOLSA programs that raise awareness of child labor issues, including the quarterly media forum that raises awareness through broadcasts on national television; regional- and local-level awareness raising to encourage community members to report child labor violations to the authorities; and awareness raising to address the trafficking of humans from rural to urban areas.(18, 31, 75)
Afar Region Emergency Migration Response Center	Center operated by the Ethiopian Federal Police to assist human trafficking victims by providing them with shelter and transportation back to their villages, in collaboration with the IOM.(31, 63)
Cash Transfer Program (2011-2014)*	3-year government program, which, in partnership with UNICEF, provides vulnerable populations, including child laborers, with cash transfer in two districts of the Tigray Region, and in the Afar, Oromia, and SNNPR regions.(10, 46, 67, 88) Aims to improve school attendance and enrollment, and to support the health of the children in the targeted districts. Operates through Community Care Coalitions.(46)
Productive Safety Net Program Phase II (PSNP)‡	Government program that has assisted approximately 8.3 million beneficiaries as of 2014.(89-93) Considered Africa's second largest social protection program, it includes several components, one of which provides cash and in-kind transfers to OVCs and households without able-bodied adults who can work. This component has been shown to reduce the amount of time children spend doing household work and increase the amount of time children spend in school.(89, 91, 93, 94)
Decent Work Country Program (2013-2015)	Describes the child labor situation in Ethiopia and includes targets for the elimination of child labor, such as the establishment of child labor units at the City Administration level.(95)
General Education Quality Improvement Project II (2014-2018)†	\$550 million project funded by the World Bank and other donors aiming to improve learning conditions across Ethiopia through curriculum development, textbook assessment, teacher training, and school construction.(96)

\* 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 Ethiopia.

While the Government participates in and implements several programs to combat the worst forms of child labor, its efforts have not sufficiently targeted sectors with a high incidence of the worst forms of child labor, such as agriculture and domestic work. In addition, in rare cases, the promotion of employment through the public works component of PSNP Phase II has been shown to increase the amount of time children work, as families substitute adult family members' labor with children's labor to receive benefits under the program.(94)



## 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 Ethiopia (Table 9).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the minimum age when children may enter hazardous work following vocational training is changed from 14 to 16, in line with ILO C. 138.	2009 – 2014
	Ensure that relevant child labor laws and regulations apply equally to children working in non-contractual and contractual employment.	2009 – 2014
	Ensure that penalties are high enough to deter child labor law violations.	2013 – 2014
	Establish a compulsory education age that is consistent with the minimum age of employment.	2012 – 2014
Enforcement	Ensure that OSHCT and BOLSA inspectors have adequate resources to conduct systematic inspections in all sectors of the economy.	2009 – 2014
	Gather and publish information about available referral mechanisms, the number of inspections, child labor law violations found, citations, and criminal prosecutions initiated and issued, and the penalties applied.	2009 – 2014
	Enforce the Labor Proclamation by authorizing the inspectorate to determine and assess penalties when child labor law violations are found.	2013 – 2014
	Make information publicly available on the number and training of investigators and the type and quality of criminal investigations conducted.	2014
	Separate trafficking statistics for children and adults.	2011 – 2014
	Increase efforts to improve the likelihood of successful prosecution and conviction of offenders who internally traffic children for forced labor and sexual exploitation.	2011 – 2014
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into this policy.	2013 – 2014
	Include budgets and action plans related to the worst forms of child labor in development agendas and policies.	2009 – 2014
	Adopt the National Child Policy and National Action Plan Against Trafficking.	2012 – 2014
Social Programs	Improve access to education in rural areas by building additional schools, implementing programs that protect communities from droughts and floods, ensuring children are registered at birth, and addressing sexual abuse and harassment in schools.	2010 – 2014
	Ensure that children can complete primary school by subsidizing or defraying the cost of school supplies.	2010 – 2014
	Assess the impact that existing social programs may have on addressing child labor.	2012 – 2014
	Develop social protection programs for the withdrawal from or prevention of children engaged in agriculture and domestic work.	2009 – 2014

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