

Eritrea

The Government of Eritrea supported programs intended to reduce the worst forms of child labor. However, these were not adequate to address the scope of Eritrea's child labor problem and omitted the numerous children working in agriculture and domestic service. The Government forcibly recruits children during the school break to pick cotton, build and maintain roads, install power and telephone lines and work as domestic servants.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Eritrea are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, many of them in agriculture and domestic service.²⁰³³ Children in rural areas of Eritrea work on farms producing corn, wheat, sorghum and other grains and in fields gathering firewood, hauling water and herding livestock. Children's work in agriculture commonly involves dangerous activities such as using dangerous machinery and tools, carrying heavy loads and applying harmful pesticides.²⁰³⁴ Children also work in domestic service, which may involve risks such as sexual abuse and other forms of abuse.²⁰³⁵

In urban areas, children transport loads and work on the streets as vendors and car washers.²⁰³⁶ Children also work in garages and workshops making household utensils and furniture, which may require them to use dangerous machinery.²⁰³⁷ In Asmara, some children engage in commercial sexual exploitation and street begging. Children working on the streets may be exposed to multiple dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements.²⁰³⁸

The Government of Eritrea imposes compulsory labor on secondary-level schoolchildren. Children in the ninth grade and above are forced to work for 2 months during the school break for Mahtot—a national program in which children may be required to build and maintain roads, install power and telephone lines, work as domestic servants and engage in agriculture work such as picking cotton.²⁰³⁹

In order to graduate, students are required by the Government to complete their final, 12th year of schooling and military training at the Sawa Military Training Camp in remote western Eritrea. Some students may be under the age of 18 while attending Sawa.²⁰⁴⁰ Students who do not attend are not eligible to take their final examinations or to graduate.²⁰⁴¹ After 6 months of compulsory military training, national service conscripts—who may be under age 18—are either drafted into the military, deployed to work in gold mines and on agriculture and construction projects or assigned to a technical college for further training.²⁰⁴² Students who avoid military service are often victims of torture and poor treatment.²⁰⁴³

Children in Eritrea are trafficked for forced labor, including commercial sexual exploitation.²⁰⁴⁴ In 2010, 250 Eritrean refugees were reportedly held hostage by traffickers in Egypt. It is unknown if children were among the refugees.²⁰⁴⁵ In rare instances, children are trafficked to the Middle East to serve as camel jockeys.²⁰⁴⁶

In Eritrea, children may enter the workforce at a young age due to the limited number of schools. Children from nomadic communities have difficulty accessing education as their seasonal movements are incompatible with the formal school calendar.²⁰⁴⁷

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Proclamation sets the minimum age for employment at 14 and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18. Under this law, hazardous

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	No
	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	No
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	14
	Free Public Education	No

work includes transporting goods and passengers; heavy lifting; working with toxic chemicals and dangerous machines; digging tunnels; and working underground in mines, quarries and

sewers.²⁰⁴⁸ However, the Labor Proclamation does not require employers to keep a register containing the name, age or date of birth of their employees, and it does not include penalties for employers of children in hazardous work or children under the minimum age. Further, the Government does not provide protection for self-employed children or children working without a contract, leaving many children working on the streets, in family businesses and as unprotected child domestics.²⁰⁴⁹ Children in apprenticeships may engage in hazardous work if supervised by a competent authority.²⁰⁵⁰ This includes dangerous and health-threatening tasks such as working in mines, quarries and sewers. It is unclear at what age a child may become an apprentice.²⁰⁵¹

Slavery, servitude and forced labor are prohibited by the Constitution.²⁰⁵² The Penal Code prohibits and provides penalties for trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation, child rape and child prostitution.²⁰⁵³ No law prohibits trafficking for labor exploitation.²⁰⁵⁴ Children under 18 are prohibited from recruitment into the armed forces by Proclamation 11/1991.²⁰⁵⁵ However, in practice, children under age 18 receive military training.²⁰⁵⁶

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Research found no evidence that the Government of Eritrea has established a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.²⁰⁵⁷

The Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare is the primary federal agency designated to enforce child labor laws, including criminal violations of the worst forms of child labor, such as trafficking. No information exists on the Ministry's funding level or whether it coordinates with other agencies to assist rescued children. Information is also unavailable on the number of inspectors, and it is not known if they receive training and whether or not a complaint mechanism exists.²⁰⁵⁸ Information on child labor investigations, prosecutions or convictions is also lacking.

During the reporting period, immigration procedures were not enforced, and non-Eritrean citizens were able to obtain Eritrean passports. Persons in Eritrea were able to change civil records, including birth certificates, as long as three people attest to the birth at the regional government administration office.²⁰⁵⁹ These practices may contribute to the trafficking in persons in Eritrea.

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Plan of Action on Child Labor and National Program of Action on Children are the primary government mechanisms to combat child labor in Eritrea. These policies prevent child labor and support victims by reintegrating them with families, communities and schools.²⁰⁶⁰

Child labor concerns are also mainstreamed into the Education Sectoral Development Plan and the UN Development Assistance Framework. However, these development policies do not have budgets, detailed action plans or targets related to the worst forms of child labor, and they do not appear to have been implemented to any significant degree.²⁰⁶¹ According to the National Policy on Education, the Government has established the right to free primary education, which is compulsory until age 14.²⁰⁶²

The Government's compulsory labor and military training requirements for schoolchildren may diminish the impact of Eritrea's policies to combat the worst forms of child labor.²⁰⁶³ The Government has not provided information during the reporting period that demonstrates that it collects information on the worst forms of child labor.²⁰⁶⁴

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

In 2010, the Government participated in the Regional Program for Eastern Africa (2009–2012) to counter trafficking of children.²⁰⁶⁵ The Government also participated in the Eastern African Police Chiefs Co-operation organization, a regional effort to improve its law enforcement capacity to combat human trafficking.²⁰⁶⁶

Eritrea also sponsored numerous youth and worker unions' anti-trafficking in persons education outreach programs.²⁰⁶⁷ Other efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor include the Government's program to provide shelter to orphans and vulnerable children.²⁰⁶⁸

Despite the initiatives described here, Eritrea's social programs are limited in scope and do not protect self-employed children or target areas where the majority of children work, such as agriculture, domestic service and street vending.

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

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Amend the Labor Proclamation to require employers to keep a register containing the name and age or date of birth of their employees and provide penalties for employers of children in hazardous work and children under the legal minimum age.
- Ensure that self-employed children and children working without a contract are protected from the worst forms of child labor.
- Establish a minimum age for apprenticeships and prohibit children in supervised vocational training programs from engaging in hazardous work.
- Enact legislation to prohibit all forms of trafficking.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.
- Publish data on inspections, criminal investigations, prosecutions and other steps taken to enforce laws.
- Ensure that immigration procedures are enforced.

IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Implement child labor objectives in national policies and development plans by including budgets, detailed action plans and targets related to the worst forms of child labor.
- Cease the forced recruitment of children for purposes of manual labor under the Mahtot program during the school break.
- Ensure that children under the age of 18 are not recruited into the national military program.
- Conduct a national labor force survey to improve the availability of data on all forms of child labor, including the worst forms.

IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Develop appropriate social protection programs to protect self-employed children and children working in agriculture and domestic service from the worst forms of child labor.
- Improve access to education by building more schools and developing alternative educational programs for nomadic communities.

²⁰³³ Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are not available from the data sources that are used by USDOL. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. For more information on sources used for these statistics, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the “Children’s Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section. See also Muluberhan Hagos, *Harmonisation of laws relating to children: Eritrea*, The African Child Policy Forum, Addis Ababa, 2007, 99; available from [http://www.africanchild.](http://www.africanchild.info/documents/Eritrea%20Report%20final%20Sarah.doc)

[info/documents/Eritrea%20Report%20final%20Sarah.doc](http://www.africanchild.info/documents/Eritrea%20Report%20final%20Sarah.doc). See also U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, January 28, 2011*, para 2. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Second and third periodic reports of States parties due in 2006: Eritrea*, CRC/C/ERI/3, Geneva, October 23, 2007, para 341; available from <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.ERI.3.pdf>.

²⁰³⁴ Hagos, *Harmonisation of laws relating to children: Eritrea*, 99. See also U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, January 28, 2011*, para 2. See also U.S. Department of State, “Eritrea,” in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2010*, Washington, DC, April 8, 2011, section 7d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/>.

- ²⁰³⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Second and third periodic reports of States parties due in 2006: Eritrea*, para 341. See also U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, February 23, 2011, para 3.b.
- ²⁰³⁶ Hagos, *Harmonisation of laws relating to children: Eritrea*, 100. See also U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, January 28, 2011, para 2.
- ²⁰³⁷ U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, January 28, 2011, paras 2, 3. See also U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, March 9, 2010, para 1.
- ²⁰³⁸ U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, January 28, 2011, para 2. See also Hadgu Mussie, “Eritrea, a Nation in Overall Crisis: Coping Strategies in Hard Times”, asmarino.com, [online], April 16, 2009 [cited December 22, 2010]; available from <http://www.asmarino.com/eyewitness-account/133-iii-eritrea-a-nation-in-overall-crisis-coping-strategies-in-hard-times->. See also Child Rights Information Network, *Child Rights References in the Universal Periodic Review: Eritrea*, November 30, 2009, para 23; available from <http://www.crin.org/docs/Eritrea.pdf>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Eritrea,” section 6.
- ²⁰³⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Service for Life: State Repression and Indefinite Conscriptioin in Eritrea*, New York, 2009, 56; available from http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/eritrea0409web_0.pdf. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *48th Session: Summary Record of the 1335th meeting: Consideration of Reports of States Parties (Continued), Consolidated second and third periodic reports of Eritrea*, CRC/C/SR.1335, Geneva, June 13, 2008, 5; available from <http://tb.ohchr.org/default.aspx?country=er>. See also U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, January 28, 2011, para 3. See also Mussie Hadgu, *Eritrea, a Nation in Crisis: Land Expropriation*, June 2009; available from <http://www.hrc-eritrea.org/article.php?id=26>.
- ²⁰⁴⁰ U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, January 28, 2011, paras 4, 7. See also UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report: Reaching the marginalized*, Oxford University Press, Paris, 2010, 338; available from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606e.pdf>. See also UK Border Agency, *Country of Origin Information Report*, April 21, 2009, 41, 49; available from <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/eritrea-220409.doc>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Eritrea,” section 6.
- ²⁰⁴¹ U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, January 28, 2011, para 4.
- ²⁰⁴² Human Rights Watch, *Service for Life: State Repression and Indefinite Conscriptioin in Eritrea*, 51-52. See also U.S. Embassy-Asmara official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, October 27, 2010. See also Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2011: Eritrea*, New York, January 2011, 3; available from <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/eritrea>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports-2010: Eritrea,” section 7c.
- ²⁰⁴³ UN General Assembly, *Compilation Prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in Accordance with Paragraph 15(B) of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1: Eritrea*, A/HRC/WG.6/6/ERI/2, September 18, 2009, 5; available from http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session6/ER/A_HRC_WG6_6_ERI_2_E.pdf.
- ²⁰⁴⁴ U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, February 23, 2011, paras 3.b, 3.c. See also U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, January 28, 2011, para 5.
- ²⁰⁴⁵ U.S. Embassy-Asmara, reporting, February 23, 2011, para 3.b.
- ²⁰⁴⁶ ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Observation concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) United Arab Emirates (ratification: 2001) Published: 2008*, December 22, 2010; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/iloquery.htm>. See also Awate, “Eritrean Regime Now Trafficking Children”, awate.com, [online], August 24, 2007 [cited February 22, 2010]; available from <http://www.awate.com/portal/content/view/4597/3/>.
- ²⁰⁴⁷ Yahoko Asai, “UNICEF supports a revived commitment to nomadic education in Eritrea”, unicef.org, [online], March 30, 2010 [cited March 2, 2011]; available from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/eritrea_53217.html?q=printme. See also Miriam Mareso, “An emphasis on education for migrant communities in Eritrea”, unicef.org, [online], April 17, 2009 [cited March 2, 2011]; available from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/eritrea_49393.html. See also Harry Hare, *Survey of ICT and Education in Africa: Eritrea Country Report*, April 2007, 4.
- ²⁰⁴⁸ Government of Eritrea, *The Labour Proclamation of Eritrea*, Public Law Number 118/2001, (2001), articles 3, 68, 69.
- ²⁰⁴⁹ Ibid., articles 3, 68, 69. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request concerning Minimum age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) Eritrea (ratification: 2000) Submitted: 2010*, December 22, 2010; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/iloquery.htm>.
- ²⁰⁵⁰ Government of Eritrea, *The Labour Proclamation of Eritrea*, articles 33-38, 69.
- ²⁰⁵¹ Ibid., articles 33-38, 69.
- ²⁰⁵² Government of Eritrea, *The Constitution of Eritrea*, (May 23, 1997), article 16(3); available from http://www.chr.up.ac.za/undp/domestic/docs/c_Eritrea.pdf.
- ²⁰⁵³ Government of Eritrea, *The Transitional Eritrean Penal Code*, (1991), articles 589, 594-595, 597, 605-606.
- ²⁰⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, “Eritrea,” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14,

2010; available from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,ERI,,4c1883f62d,0.html>. See also Government of Eritrea, *The Transitional Eritrean Penal Code*, articles 606-060.

²⁰⁵⁵ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, “Eritrea,” in *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, London, 2008; available from http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country_pdfs/FINAL_2008_Global_Report.pdf.

²⁰⁵⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Eritrea,” section 7c-7d. See also UK Border Agency, *Country of Origin Information Report*, 41.

²⁰⁵⁷ U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, January 28, 2011*, para 9.

²⁰⁵⁸ Ibid., paras 10-11. See also U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, February 23, 2011*, paras 4.b-d, 5.f.

²⁰⁵⁹ U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, February 23, 2011*, para 4.e.

²⁰⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Eritrea.” See also U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, January 28, 2011*, para 12.

²⁰⁶¹ U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, January 28, 2011*, para 12. See also United Nations, *Eritrea: UN Development Assistance Framework (2007-2011)*, 2007, 27, 45; available from http://www.er.undp.org/un_eritrea/docs/undaf_pub_eritrea.pdf.

²⁰⁶² UNESCO, *World Data on Education*, IBE/2010/CP/WDE/EA, September 2010, 3; available from http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Eritrea.pdf.

²⁰⁶³ U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, January 28, 2011*, paras 3-4, 13.

²⁰⁶⁴ Ibid., para 6.

²⁰⁶⁵ UNODC, *Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Security in Eastern Africa: Regional Program 2009-2012*, December 2009, 3; available from http://www.unodc.org/documents/easternafrika//regional-ministerial-meeting/Eastern_Africa_Regional_Programme_Final_Draft.pdf. See also Embassy of Ethiopia, “Eritrea Rejects US Country Report on Human Trafficking,” www.eastafricaforum.net, [online], June 18, 2009 [cited December 22, 2010]; available from <http://www.eastafricaforum.net/2009/06/19/eritrea-rejects-us-country-report-on-human-trafficking/>.

²⁰⁶⁶ Interpol, “Police co-operation in East Africa focus of regional police chiefs meeting in Sudan,” [interpol.int](http://www.interpol.int), [online], October 20, 2010 [cited December 22, 2010]; available from <http://www.interpol.int/Public/ICPO/PressReleases/PR2010/PR087.asp>.

²⁰⁶⁷ U.S. Embassy- Asmara, *reporting, January 28, 2011*, para 14.

²⁰⁶⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Eritrea.” See also Shabait, “Effective social security programs implemented in Southern region,” [shabait.com](http://www.shabait.com), [online], December 21, 2010 [cited January 10, 2011]; available from <http://www.shabait.com/news/local-news/4086-effective-social-security-programs-implemented-in-southern-region>.