

# Burundi

*In 2011, Burundi made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The minimum age for compulsory education falls below the minimum age for work, leaving children vulnerable to exploitation. In addition, the Government did not conduct any child labor inspections, nor did it train inspectors or other government officials on child labor law enforcement. Furthermore, while the Government has drafted at least three policies to provide greater protection to Burundian children, none have been adopted for implementation, and research found no evidence of any government programs to combat child labor. Children in Burundi continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, many of them in dangerous forms of agriculture.*

## Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	10.4 (239,719)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	61.7
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	7.1
Primary Completion Rate		56.1

### Sources:

**Primary completion rate:** Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

**All other data:** Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2005.(2)

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

Children in Burundi are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, many of them in dangerous forms of agriculture.(3-7) Children in agriculture may use potentially dangerous machinery and tools, carry heavy loads and apply harmful pesticides.(8) Although the extent of the problem is unknown, children also herd cattle and goats, which may expose them to the elements and force them to work with large or dangerous animals.(9)

In urban areas, children are employed as domestic servants.(3, 4, 9) Reports indicate that children working in domestic service in Burundi are often isolated from the public and receive no compensation for their work.(3) Some employers avoid paying their child domestics by accusing them of criminal activity. Children have been incarcerated because of false accusations.(9) Children in domestic service may also be vulnerable to long working hours, and physical and sexual exploitation by their employers.(8)



Children also work on the streets as porters and vendors.(3, 4) They may be exposed to multiple dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements.(8) While evidence is limited, there are reports that children living and working in the streets are sometimes raped, including by older boys who coerce sexual activity in exchange for promising to “protect” their victims.(10) Such sexual activity makes street children vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.(10)

The commercial sexual exploitation of children exists in Burundi.(7) While little evidence exists of large-scale child prostitution, girls are sometimes pushed into prostitution by older women who initially offer free room and board, but then force the children into prostitution to pay for their expenses.(11) Poverty may also cause girls to prostitute themselves for money for basic needs.(12) Male tourists also are reported to sexually exploit girls.(11)

There are reports that Burundian children are trafficked internally for work in domestic service.(13) Burundian girls are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to other countries.(11, 13) Burundian children are trafficked into forced labor in Tanzania. Children are also reportedly lured under false promises or coerced into forced labor in domestic service or agriculture.(11)

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for work at 16.(14) The Penal Code sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18. Persons who employ children under age 18 in hazardous labor may be punished with a fine and 3 to 5 years of penal servitude.(15) The Government maintains a list of occupations

forbidden for children under age 18. It includes working with automobiles, using industrial tools such as metal cutters, working in slaughterhouses, mining minerals and serving alcohol.(3, 4)

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	No
	Minimum Age for Work	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

Burundi's Penal Code criminalizes recruiting and using children under age 18 for child pornography or prostitution, or profiting from such practices.(15) The Penal Code also forbids trafficking children under age 18 as well as agreeing to or profiting from child trafficking. It is also illegal to use children in illicit activities.(15)

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.(16) The Penal Code sets 18 as the minimum age for military recruitment and makes the military use of children under age 16 a war crime.(16-18)

### Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Multisectoral Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor coordinates efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. The Committee consists of nine members from the Government, civil society and UNICEF.(4) Research did not identify how the Committee functions, how often it meets, or if it receives funding.

At the local level, the Government's Centers of Family Development are responsible for the coordination and implementation of policies on children, women and the family. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed concern that the Centers do not cover all regions of the country.(19)

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security is responsible for enforcing all labor laws, including those on child labor. The Ministry uses criminal penalties, civil fines and court orders as mechanisms to enforce labor laws.(7) The Ministry employs 15 inspectors to enforce all labor laws.(4) This is an inadequate number given Burundi has 17 provinces and a population of over 8 million. Additionally, inspectors have limited funds and fuel for vehicles.(4, 20) Inspectors only initiate investigations in response to complaints, although a formal system has not been established to file such complaints.(4, 7) During the reporting period, the Government did not conduct any child labor inspections, nor did the Government conduct any training for inspectors or other government officials on child labor law enforcement.(4)

The Brigade for the Protection of Women and Children within the National Police is responsible for, among other things, enforcing criminal violations of the worst forms of child labor and is mandated to protect children from criminal influences and harm.(4, 11) In 2010, the most recent year for which data is available, there were 100 officers in the Brigade.(21) The National Police investigated two cases of child trafficking and issued two violations during the reporting period, resulting in the removal of 14 children in 2011.(4) Three of these children were Burundian girls rescued before reaching their final destination of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where they were promised legitimate work but intended for commercial sexual exploitation. The other 11 children rescued were trafficked internally for domestic servitude.(13, 22) It is not known why there were only two cases investigated during the reporting period.

### Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government drafted a new Poverty Reduction Scheme with civil society, NGOs and the international donor community, but the parliament must approve it before it is submitted to the World Bank.(13) The Ministry of Labor and Social Security has also adopted a plan to eliminate all forms of child labor by 2025; however, this plan has not yet been implemented as the Government is waiting on UNICEF and ILO assistance.(4)

The Government's Municipal Council for Children and Youth (CMEJ) aims to provide a network of services for street children, former child combatants and child trafficking victims.(11) The CMEJ began to draft an action plan for its work in 2010 but has not yet produced a finalized plan and has only said that it will "soon."(11, 23)

Education in Burundi is free and compulsory until grade six or approximately age 12.(4, 7) This standard makes children ages 12 to 15 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor as they are not required to be in school and are below the minimum age for work. In addition, some children are prevented from enrolling in school because they do not have required birth certificates; the Government has not registered approximately 40 percent of all births.(7, 19)

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

The Government relies primarily on NGOs to provide care and services for exploited children.(7, 24, 25)

Research did not identify any programs to combat the worst forms of child labor.

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Coordination and Enforcement	Devote additional resources to enforcement including increasing the number of inspectors, establishing a system for filing complaints, and targeting investigations in sectors where a high prevalence of child labor exists.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Expand the Centers of Family Development to cover all regions of the country.	2011
Policies	Establish a policy framework that protects children, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the current draft plan of action for eliminating child labor by 2025.</li> <li>• Finalize the CMEJ's plan of action</li> <li>• Approve the Poverty Reduction Scheme for submission to the World Bank</li> <li>• Assess and amend current practices for the registration of births and issuance of birth certificates to ensure all children are able to enroll in school</li> <li>• Raise the age for free and compulsory education to 16, the minimum age for work</li> </ul>	2010 2011 2011 2010, 2011 2009, 2010, 2011
	Implement programs to address all of the worst forms of child labor in the country.	2009, 2010, 2011

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