

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2019, Iraq made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Kurdistan Regional Government established an Inter-ministerial Committee on Trafficking in Persons to oversee implementation of its Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law. However, Iraq is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because it continued a practice that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Government authorities continued to inappropriately detain and prosecute without legal representation children allegedly affiliated with ISIS—some of whom were victims of forcible recruitment and use—including using abusive interrogation techniques and torture to gain children’s confessions instead of screening these children as potential victims of the worst forms of child labor. In addition, NGOs reported that in 2019, some militia groups affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces, including Iranian-backed groups, recruited boys younger than age 18 to fight in Syria and Yemen. While these forces operated under the umbrella of the Popular Mobilization Forces—which was legally incorporated into the Iraqi defense forces in 2016—they generally remained outside of the command and control of the Iraqi government. Children in Iraq engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and in commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The government did not provide information on its labor or criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. The government also continues to lack programs that focus on assisting children involved in the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Iraq engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-5) Household surveys, such as the 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Iraq, are not designed to capture the labor performed by IDPs living in camps and, therefore, the 2018 MICS survey does not capture children in this population involved in child labor. Table I provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Iraq. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table I. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	78.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2018. (7)

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	Farming, including the production of dairy products (4,8-10)
	Herding livestock (10)
	Fishing, activities unknown (4,8)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Construction (9,10)
	Working in carpentry workshops (10,11)
	Making bricks, including transporting bricks and working in kilns (4,8,12,13)
	Working in factories, including glass, household cleaners, paint, steel, garments and textiles, perfume, electrical materials, and plastic recycling (4,8-10,12,14,15)
Services	Street work, including selling goods, pushing carts, cleaning cars, and begging (4,8,13,15-17)
	Working at gas stations† and auto repair and other shops (8,12,18-20)
	Working in landfills, scavenging and collecting garbage† and scrap metal (12,13,15,16,21,22)
	Domestic work (10)
	Working in hotels, restaurants, and tea houses (4,8,10,20)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including cross-border smuggling and drug and weapon trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,4,8,24-26)
	Domestic work as a result of human trafficking (27-30)
	Forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3-5,8)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-5,13,28,31)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (3-5,8,32)

† 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.

Despite ISIS losing control over the last remaining territory in Iraq in 2017, ISIS carried out deadly attacks in Iraq throughout 2019. (33) ISIS continued to abduct and forcibly recruit and use children in combat and support roles, including as human shields, informants, bomb makers, executioners, and suicide bombers; some of these children were as young as eight years old and some were mentally disabled. (3,34)

In 2019, NGOs reported that some Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)-affiliated militias—including Iranian-backed Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), and Kataib Hizballah (KH)—recruited boys younger than the age of 18 to fight in Syria and Yemen, most commonly out of schools. (3,4) Some of the forces in HHN, AAH, and KH militias operate under the umbrella of the PMF, which was legally incorporated into the Iraqi defense forces in 2016, but generally operates outside of the command and control of the Iraqi government. (3,4,8,35) During the reporting period, sources reported the Kurdistan Worker’s Party and People’s Protection Units, operating in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and Sinjar, continued to recruit and use children. (5) Local NGOs reported that Yezidi militias in Sinjar, including the Yezidkhan Protection Force and Sinjar Command Force, recruited Yezidi boys. (4)

Throughout the country, some girls were subjected to commercial sexual exploitation through temporary marriages. (27) Sources reported that AAH and HHN profited from offices facilitating temporary marriage and provided protection to them. (5) Syrian girls from refugee camps in the Kurdistan region were sometimes forced into early or temporary marriages with Iraqi or other refugee men; some Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) authorities allegedly ignored, or accepted bribes to ignore such cases, including those in which girls were sold multiple times. (27) NGOs report that women and girls in IDP camps, whose family members have alleged ties to ISIS, continued to endure a complex system of sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and abuse by armed actors residing in the camps, security and military officials, and camp personnel controlling access to humanitarian assistance and services. Iranian girls were subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in the Kurdistan Region and Iraqi girls were trafficked to other Arab states in the region and to Europe for commercial sexual exploitation. (3) Child laborers were also exposed to sexual violence and abuse. (13)

In previous years, ISIS sold boys who they considered too young or too weak to engage in armed conflict into forced domestic work. (29,30) ISIS kidnapped and trafficked Yezidi children to Turkey for exploitation. (3) Some children in IDP camps who were suspected of having ties to ISIS were blocked from obtaining civil documentation and returning home or were subjected to commercial sexual exploitation. (3,36)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Children in border regions with Iran are sometimes used as porters, known as “*kolbar*” in Kurdish, to smuggle goods across the border, and are subjected to life-threatening weather conditions, dangerous terrain, unexploded ordinance, and targeting by Iranian border guards. (25,26) In 2019, as many as 21 adolescents were killed by Iranian border guards or died while making the trip. (26)




Children faced numerous barriers to accessing education, including displacement, the lack of local schools, the use of schools as shelters by IDPs, costs of transportation and school supplies, lack of sufficient educational facilities, and IDPs’ and refugees’ lack of identification documents. (8,9,13,37,38) In addition, children with suspected ties to ISIS may not have access to identification documents required for school enrollment. (36) According to UNICEF, over half of the schools in Iraq required repairs and the education of 3 million children had been interrupted. (8) UNICEF also reported that, while 92 percent of children enroll in primary schools, only half of children from economically disadvantaged families complete primary school and only a quarter complete secondary education. (39) In addition, in 2018, it was estimated that some 50,000 Syrian refugee children did not attend formal school; however, this number is over-inclusive as it also counts children who receive permissible non-formal education. (40) For these refugees, the majority of whom live in the Kurdistan Region, access to education was limited because of security concerns; school-related costs such as transportation, textbooks and uniforms; and language issues, due to most classes in the Kurdistan Region being taught in Kurdish rather than Arabic, the language of Syrian children. (41)

As of December 2019, 1.41 million people, including about 658,000 children, remained internally displaced; 4.6 million individuals, including over 2 million children, had returned home to newly accessible areas; and 3.3 million children in Iraq were in need of education support. (42) UNICEF supported 3,354 children with direct cash assistance for the 2018–2019 academic year; however, this program was discontinued for 2019–2020. (42) The KRG agreed to start paying incentives to Syrian refugee volunteer teachers in the Kurdistan region; however, it stopped doing so in January 2020. (4) The lack of this direct cash assistance to children and incentive payments to volunteer teachers makes children vulnerable to child labor and child trafficking.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Iraq 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 laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Iraq’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Related Entity	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Iraq	Yes	15	Article 7 of the 2015 Labor Law (43)
	Kurdistan Region	Yes	15	Article 90.1 of the 1987 Labor Law (44)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Iraq	Yes	18	Article 95 of the 2015 Labor Law (43)
	Kurdistan Region	Yes	18	Articles 90.2 and 91.1 of the 1987 Labor Law (44)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Iraq	Yes		Articles 95 and 98 of the 2015 Labor Law; Ministry of Labor's Instruction 19 of 1987 (43,45)
	Kurdistan Region	Yes		Article 91.2 of the 1987 Labor Law; Ministry of Labor's Instruction 19 of 1987 (44,45)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Iraq	Yes		Articles 9 and 11.2 of the 2015 Labor Law (43)
	Kurdistan Region	Yes		Articles 91.3(a), 91.4, and 97 of the 1987 Labor Law; Articles 1 and 6 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking (43,46)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Iraq	No		Articles 1 and 6 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking (46)
	Kurdistan Region	No		Articles 91.3(a), 91.4, and 97 of the 1987 Labor Law; Articles 1 and 6 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking (44,46)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Iraq	No		Articles 399 and 403 of the Penal Code (47)
	Kurdistan Region	Yes		Articles 91.3(b), 91.4, and 97 of the 1987 Labor Law (44)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Iraq	No		
	Kurdistan Region	Yes		Articles 91.3(c), 91.4, and 97 of the 1987 Labor Law (44)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Iraq and Kurdistan Region	Yes	18	Section 6(2) of the CPA Order 22 (48)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Iraq and Kurdistan Region	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Iraq and Kurdistan Region	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Iraq	No	12‡	Articles 8.1.1 and 11.1 of the Education Law; Article 1.3 of the Law on Compulsory Education (49,50)
	Kurdistan Region	Yes	15	Articles 6 and 10 of the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Education Law (51)
Free Public Education	Iraq	Yes		Article 34.2 of the Constitution; Article 9 of the Education Law (49,52)
	Kurdistan Region	Yes		Article 10 of the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Education Law (51)

* No conscription (48)

‡ Age calculated based on available information

Article 117 of the Constitution of Iraq recognizes Kurdistan, which comprises the provinces of Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaimaniya, and Halabja, as a federal region. (52-55) Article 121 grants the Kurdistan Region the right to exercise legislative and executive powers. (52) The Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament must endorse any laws the Government of Iraq has passed after 1991 for such laws to enter into force in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. (53-55)

In Iraq, Article 1 of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking requires force or coercion to be present as an element of the crime of child trafficking, which is inconsistent with international standards, including Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol. (46) The Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament endorsed the Iraqi Law to Combat Human Trafficking, which means the operative human trafficking standard in the Kurdistan Region is also not in compliance with international standards. (56)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

The KRG reported that a draft Child Protection Law was prepared by a joint committee that included the ministries of Labor and Social Affairs, Education, Health, Culture, the Independent Human Rights Commission, UNICEF, and other child protection NGOs, and was submitted to the KRG Parliament for ratification. (57)

In Iraq, the laws do not sufficiently prohibit the use of children in prostitution or the use, procuring, and offering of children for the production of pornography or pornographic performances. (47)

Moreover, under the Iraqi Education Law and under the Law on Compulsory Education, children are required to attend primary school for only 6 years, which is typically up to age 12. (49,50) This standard makes children ages 12 to 15 particularly vulnerable to child labor, because they are not required to be in school, yet they are not legally permitted to work.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and the KRG's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (KMOLSA) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Related Entity	Role
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA)	Iraq	Enforces child labor laws and regulations through its Child Labor Unit. (8) Conducts research on child labor through its Childhood Welfare Authority. Receives complaints of child labor cases. (8)
Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (KMOLSA)	Kurdistan Region	Enforces child labor laws and regulations in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Police units of the KRG's Ministry of Interior (KMOI) play a supporting role in the daily activities of the Ministry. (8)
Ministry of Interior	Iraq	Enforces criminal laws on the worst forms of child labor. Collaborates with MOLSA, the Iraqi Industries Federation, and the Confederation of Trade Unions to conduct inspection campaigns. (8) Maintains a hotline for victims of human trafficking, with calls routed directly to the Ministry's Anti-Trafficking Department. (8)
Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Interior (KMOI)	Kurdistan Region	Investigates cases of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. (8) Includes a Counter Trafficking Directorate within KMOI. (56)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Iraq took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority and operations of MOLSA and the KRG's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (KMOLSA) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (43)	No (43)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	No (8)	No (4)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	No (8)	No (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (8)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (4)

In 2017, MOLSA employed 98 inspectors and research was unable to determine that significantly more have been hired. KMOLSA reported 18 inspectors were employed during the reporting period. (4) Although the number of labor inspectors in Iraq during the reporting period is unknown, research indicates that in 2019 the number of labor inspectors was likely insufficient for the size of Iraq and the KRG’s workforce, which combined includes over 8.9 million workers. (4,58) According to the ILO’s technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Iraq would employ about 593 labor inspectors. (59,60)

In 2019, KMOLSA did not provide training on child labor to inspectors and only conducted inspections for child labor in response to complaints. (57) When inspectors identify child labor violations, they can issue warnings and instructions, or refer cases to court. (61) KMOLSA indicated that funding is insufficient to carry out its duties. (4)

The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Iraq took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators and prosecution planning.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (8)	Unknown (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (4)

In 2019, Iraqi and KRG authorities continued to inappropriately detain and prosecute without legal representation Iraqi and foreign children allegedly affiliated to ISIS—some of whom were victims of forcible recruitment and use—and used abusive interrogation techniques and torture to gain children’s confessions; the government did not screen these children as potential human trafficking victims. (3,32,66)

KRG officials stated that courts can refer cases of the worst forms of child labor to KMOLSA. (14) The government did not investigate or hold anyone criminally accountable for continued allegations of unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. The government also failed to investigate and hold criminally accountable military and security personnel for allegations of the sexual exploitation of girls in IDP camps. (3) An NGO reported that police occasionally detained children engaged in street begging and kept them in custody before releasing them; police did not screen these children as possible victims of human trafficking or refer them to appropriate protection services. (3,4)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

According to the KRG, between 2014 and 2019, KRG authorities funded the rescue of more than 3,515 kidnapped Yazidis from ISIS, including 1,600 children. Civil society organizations reported that returned victims of sexual exploitation remained vulnerable to exploitation upon their return to the Kurdistan Region. (57)

Some victims of trafficking, including children trafficked for child soldiering, continued to be punished for unlawful acts while being trafficked. (27,55,67) Lack of sufficient coordination among judicial authorities and security forces across governorates led to re-arrests of some children previously cleared of charges related to ISIS. (68,69)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including coordination among agencies to effectively process cases of children suspected of having ties with ISIS or children who are victims of human trafficking.

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Related Entity	Role & Description
Inter-Ministerial Committee on Child Labor	Iraq	Coordinates overall government efforts to combat child labor, research policies regarding child labor, and design and manage projects. Members included representatives from MOLSA and four other ministries. (4) Research was unable to determine whether the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Child Labor was active during the reporting period.
Central Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons	Iraq	Oversees the implementation of the Law to Combat Human Trafficking and serves as the national coordinating body on trafficking in persons. Led by the Ministry of Interior, and includes representatives from five ministries, KMOI, and two other state entities. (4,14,18) In the past, a lack of sufficient coordination between judicial authorities and security forces led to some children, who were suspected of affiliation with ISIS, cleared of allegations, and released from custody, sometimes being re-arrested for the same allegations. (62,68) Active in 2019. (57)
KRG High Committee on Human Trafficking	Kurdistan Region	Members include representatives of KMOLSA and KMOI. (4) Research was unable to determine whether the KRG High Committee on Human Trafficking was active during the reporting period.
KRG Council of Ministers	Kurdistan Region	KMOI and KMOLSA coordinate on child labor in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region through the KRG Council of Ministers. (4) The council met regularly during the reporting period. (57)
Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trafficking in Persons*	Kurdistan Region	Makes recommendations on implementing the KRG's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law. Headed by the Director General of the <i>Diwan</i> at the Ministry of Interior, it also includes 17 members from several ministries and services. (5) Established in August 2019. Starting in October 2019, committee members met every 60 days and forwarded their recommendations to the inter-ministerial committee after each meeting. (5)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

In December 2019, the government of Iraq presented a proposal to prepare a comprehensive plan to reduce child recruitment operations in armed and terrorist conflicts to an intergovernmental committee headed by MOLSA. This proposal was approved with funding by the council. (57)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Related Entity	Description
Child Protection Policy (2017–2022)	Iraq	Provides a holistic approach to addressing children’s needs, including ameliorating the child labor situation in the country through prevention, protection, and rehabilitation programs such as a poverty alleviation initiative, and educational and mental health services. Includes a component to provide rehabilitation and reintegration activities for children previously engaged in armed conflict and children who experienced trauma during the period of ISIS occupation. (8) The policy does not specifically cover other worst forms of child labor present in Iraq, including forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

Based on available information, there were no child labor policies in the Kurdistan Region. (8)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including services to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Related Entity	Description
Informal Education†	Iraq	Government-supported informal education systems, including evening school programs and the fast education mode that encourages children ages 12 to 18 who have dropped out of school to continue their education. (8) Research was unable to determine what steps were undertaken in 2019 to implement this program.
Conditional Subsidies Program†	Iraq	Provides assistance to low-income families for children to stay in school and out of the workforce. In 2019, MOLSA continued to provide cash assistance to low-income families to send their children to school. (4,8)
Shelters for Human Trafficking Victims†	Iraq	MOLSA-operated shelter in Baghdad for human trafficking victims, including children involved in the worst forms of child labor; other facilities are in Basrah, Kirkuk, and Ninewa provinces. (8) In 2019, shelters received victims of human trafficking. Officials indicated that poor coordination and policies that dissuade victims from seeking help accounted for a low number of victims receiving services through shelters. (5)

† Program is funded by the Government of Iraq.

Neither the Government of Iraq nor the KRG reported efforts to provide protection services to demobilized child soldiers of ISIS or the PMF, thus failing to prevent re-victimization or re-recruitment of these children into armed groups. (3) Likewise, research found no evidence of specific active programs to support children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation or other worst forms of child labor, including child soldiering. Existing programs do not sufficiently address the lack of access to education in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Iraq (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the laws comprehensively prohibit child trafficking in all parts of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, and do not require force or coercion for their application, in accordance with international standards.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child in prostitution and the use, procuring, and offering of a child for the production of pornography and pornographic performances.	2019
	Ensure that hazardous work protections apply to all children, including children working in family businesses under the authority of family members, and children ages 15 to 17.	2016 – 2019

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law in Iraq criminally prohibits the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2013 – 2019
	Increase the age of compulsory schooling in Iraq to at least the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2019
Enforcement	Ensure that children under age 18 are not recruited or used by armed groups affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces or by Iraqi Security Forces. Hold those that recruit and use children criminally accountable, including leaders of non-state armed groups, where possible.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that routine labor inspections are carried out in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.	2019
	Publish labor law enforcement information, such as the funding of the labor inspectorate, number of inspectors, inspections, and violations.	2011 – 2019
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties.	2017 – 2019
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators receive training, including refresher courses, on child labor.	2016 – 2019
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO technical advice and ensure adequate funding to enforce legal protections against child labor, including its worst forms.	2011 – 2019
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement on the worst forms of child labor in Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.	2013 – 2019
	Ensure that child victims of human trafficking are properly screened and not prosecuted for crimes they were forced to commit; that children are not arrested, detained, or denied services solely on the basis of their family members' perceived ties to ISIS; and that children suspected of ISIS affiliation are not subjected to torture.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that allegations of sexual exploitation of girls in internally displaced persons camps by government officials are investigated and those responsible are held criminally liable.	2019
	Through enhanced coordination among government agencies, ensure that children previously cleared of charges related to armed conflict, human trafficking, and forced labor are not at risk of re-arrest and re-prosecution.	2017 – 2019
Coordination	Ensure all coordinating bodies meet and are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2017 – 2019
	Implement the Child Protection Policy in Iraq, and adopt a child labor policy in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.	2018 – 2019
Government Policies	Adopt policies to address child labor in forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation.	2019
	Ensure that children are discouraged from enlisting in armed groups and receiving military training.	2015 – 2019
Social Programs	Ensure that universal access to education is consistent with international standards, including for refugee and internally displaced children.	2013 – 2019
	Implement programs to address child labor in relevant sectors in Iraq, such as commercial sexual exploitation, informal education programs and shelters for human trafficking victims, and demobilize and reintegrate children engaged in armed groups.	2009 – 2019

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