

NO ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT COMPLICIT IN FORCED CHILD LABOR

In 2020, South Sudan is receiving an assessment of no advancement. Despite initiatives to address child labor, South Sudan is assessed as having made no advancement because it demonstrated a practice of being complicit in the use of forced child labor in more than isolated incidents. Military forces continued to recruit children, sometimes forcibly, to fight opposition groups. Otherwise, the government made efforts by signing into law a United Nations comprehensive action plan to end grave violations against children, inaugurating a juvenile court, and deploying a distance-learning program that reached 1.5 million children. Children in South Sudan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including use in armed conflict and forced labor in cattle herding. The government did not hold perpetrators of child labor accountable and has yet to ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. In addition, police continued to arrest and imprison children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation rather than treating them as victims.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in South Sudan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including use in armed conflict and forced labor in cattle herding. (1-10) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in South Sudan.

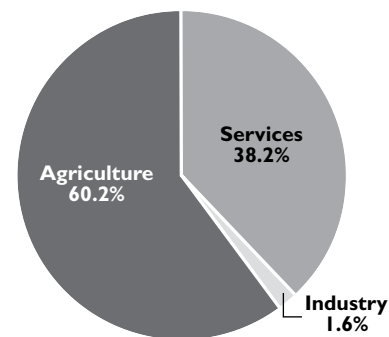
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	45.6 (463,624)
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	31.5
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	10.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		27.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (11)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Fifth Housing and Population Census, 2008. (12)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



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 activities, including planting and harvesting crops (10,13,14)
	Cattle herding† (10,14,15)
	Gathering firewood (14,16)
Industry	Construction,† including building and transporting materials (14,15)
	Rock breaking† (14,15)
	Making bricks (1,10,14,16)
	Gold mining,† including carrying soil and panning (2,14,16,17)
Services	Domestic work (14)
	Street work, including vending, polishing shoes, preparing tea, selling black market gasoline, and ticket taking for group transport companies (10,14,16)
	Cooking and cleaning in restaurants or food stands (10,14)
	Scrap metal and empty bottle collection (15,18)
	Work in slaughterhouses, including transporting livestock and meat (15)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced labor in brickmaking, cattle herding, gold mining, and market vending (14,16,19-21)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,14,16,19)
	Forced recruitment of children by state and non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (14,21-23)

† 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.

The 2018 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) mandates the release and reintegration of child soldiers by all armed groups. (14,24) During the reporting period, signatories to the R-ARCSS recommitted to a UN Action Plan to end and prevent all grave violations against children, including recruitment and use in armed conflict. (25) Despite this commitment, evidence suggests that the South Sudan People's Defense Force (SSPDF), the national army of South Sudan, continued to forcibly recruit children in 2020. (10,22,26) The government continued to participate in child soldier release and reintegration ceremonies, but it did not hold SSPDF officers criminally accountable for the unlawful recruitment and use of children. (23)

Since the onset of the conflict in December 2013, government and opposition forces have recruited more than 19,000 children. (14,27) The number of grave violations decreased significantly in the second half of the reporting period, as parties to the R-ARCSS began to observe a ceasefire. (28) Many former child combatants have since been released or are no longer classified as children. (14,29) Nevertheless, both government and non-state armed groups, including the SSPDF and Sudan People's Liberation Army – In Opposition (SPLA-IO), recruited and used children as young as age 12, sometimes forcibly. (21,22) Four children were between the ages of 13 and 14 years old; the rest were between 15 and 17 years old. (10)

Recruitment rates spiked in January and February 2020 ahead of a planned ceasefire, and observers documented systematic recruitment of children through June 2020. (10,14,22,28,30) SSPDF Division 4 commander Brigadier General James Galiak Kai, under Vice President Taban Deng Gai, and Major General Turuk Khor of SPLA-IO Division 4A, both led forced recruitment drives during the reporting period. (26) Other perpetrators include a range of opposition groups, including the National Salvation Front-Khalid Butrus and the South Sudan National Liberation Movement. (28) In some instances, local commissioners carried out recruitment drives on behalf of the state's National Security Services and the SSPDF. (22,30,31) In Warrap, elements of South Sudan's National Security Services and SSPDF leveraged a cattle extortion scheme to procure children and young men of fighting age. Non-signatories to the ceasefire, including Paul Malong's South Sudan United Front and the National Salvation Front, also forcibly abducted children from their homes, schools, and communities. (14,22,29,30,32)

Children were subjected to rape and sexual slavery by armed elements; some were forced to serve as "wives" of commanders and members of armed groups. (14,33) This sexual exploitation has political and commercial elements because it is used as in-kind payment for fighters. (10) Although some children joined voluntarily, they were later unable to leave the groups at will. (9,22,34) Children affiliated with non-state armed groups performed active combat roles, perpetrated violence against civilians, and recruited other children. They also collected firewood, manned checkpoints, and carried out other support roles, including as cooks, porters, spies, and bodyguards to senior officers. (14,19,34)

An even greater number of children fight as part of local community defense forces. (16) Children abducted by armed pastoralists may be forcibly incorporated into heavily militarized cattle rustling networks. Older boys are forced to work as soldiers, herders, or cattle rustlers. (10) Younger children tend to smaller livestock, and teenagers serve as auxiliaries for armed pastoralists or self-defense groups. (35,36) Among certain tribes, cattle raiding marks a rite of passage to adulthood. (35,36) An estimated 10,000 children are engaged in herding cattle throughout the country. Some of these children are used in armed cattle raids on other tribes. (10)

As of December 2020, South Sudan hosted approximately 1.6 million IDPs, with 2.2 million South Sudanese refugees living in neighboring countries. These groups, including orphaned children, were at increased risk of

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human trafficking and other forms of labor exploitation. (21) UNICEF has registered over 26,000 unaccompanied minors since the onset of the conflict. These children are particularly vulnerable to abduction for forced labor or commercial sex. (8,19,37,38) South Sudan has never conducted a comprehensive child labor survey, so information about sectors in which child labor occurs is unavailable. (14)

Research suggests that border closures and restrictions on regional travel to contain the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in human trafficking, as criminal networks exploited unofficial entry points. Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Eritrean business owners recruited and exploited their compatriots who entered South Sudan, including girls who were forced into domestic servitude. (21) Children employed in hotels, restaurants, and construction were forced to work for little or no pay, and some were subjected to sex trafficking. (21) Girls in rural areas, meanwhile, who gather firewood or collect water are at risk of violence and sexual exploitation. In gold mining regions, children work alongside their families in artisanal mining operations, especially in the Kapoeta area of Equatoria. (10) An estimated 7,600 children are employed in mining, shops, and other work in the informal economy in Kapoeta. There is anecdotal evidence of children selling a drug known as “Five,” a street name for Diazepam, a benzodiazepine. The drug is imported from Uganda and sold and consumed by children on the streets. (10)




South Sudan's out-of-school rate is one of the highest in the world, with an estimated 1 in 13 children expected to complete a full cycle of primary education. (3,37,39) In 2020, before the onset of the pandemic, South Sudan's out-of-school population reached a record 2.8 million. Conflict, flooding, and the pandemic, among other shocks, led to additional school closures and a subsequent increase in child marriages and child labor during the reporting period. (21,40) Poor families exchanged their young daughters for a bride price, or as restitution following inter-communal conflict. (10) Girls forced into marriages as compensation for inter-ethnic killings are subsequently subjected to sexual slavery or domestic servitude. (10,21) In both situations, girls were subjected to forced domestic labor. Ongoing fighting hindered the government's ability to deliver aid, provide education, and address the worst forms of child labor. (10,14,39) Moreover, South Sudan's education sector is chronically underfunded. Public school teachers were paid sporadically, leading to low morale and frequent absenteeism. (10,14) In addition to the abduction and use of children, ongoing military operations in conflict-affected areas forced teachers to flee. Armed groups, including government forces, continue to occupy schools in contested areas, although school occupations decreased significantly during the reporting period. (10,14) Government forces occupied at least two schools at the close of the reporting period. (41)

Although the Constitution and the Child Act provide for free primary education, in practice, many families must contribute school fees to pay teacher salaries and other related costs, which may be prohibitive. (37,39,42) In addition, children in pastoralist communities generally lack access to schools, materials, or teachers. (35)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

South Sudan has ratified most 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	

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The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in South Sudan’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 12 of the Labor Act; Article 25(3) of the Child Act (43,44)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 12 and 13 of the Labor Act; Articles 22(3), 24(1), and 25(1) of the Child Act (43,44)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 25(2) of the Child Act (43)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 10(1) and 13(2)(a) of the Labor Act; Articles 277–279 of the Penal Code; Article 13 of the Constitution (44-46)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 13(2) of the Labor Act; Article 22(3)(b) of the Child Act; Articles 276 and 278–282 of the Penal Code (43-45)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 13(2)(b) of the Labor Act; Articles 22(3)(c)–(d), 22(4), and 25(2)(m) of the Child Act; Articles 258 and 276 of the Penal Code (43-45)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 13(2)(c) of the Labor Act; Article 24(1) of the Child Act; Article 383(3)(d) of the Penal Code (43-45)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 31(1) of the Child Act; Section 22 of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army Act (43,47)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 31(1) of the Child Act; Sections 20 and 22(2) of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army Act (43,47)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 31(1), 31(2) and 32 of the Child Act (43)
Compulsory Education Age	No	13	Article 9.1(b) of the General Education Act; Article 14(1) of the Child Act (43,48)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 6(a) of the General Education Act; Article 13(4)(b) of the Labour Code; Article 14(1) of the Child Act; Article 29.2 of the Constitution (43,44,46,48)

There are no regulations governing the Labor Act’s implementation. In accordance with the Labor Act, the Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development (MOL) must draft and issue regulations to implement key elements related to child labor, including the number of hours and conditions for light work, the exceptions under which children age 16 may perform hazardous work, and a complete list of hazardous work. (9,44) Drafting regulations will require cooperation between MOL and the Ministry of Justice. (14)

On February 7, 2020, the government signed a comprehensive action plan to end all grave violations against children into law. (25)

Children are required to attend school only until age 13. This standard makes children between ages 13 and 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor because they are not required to be in school but are also not legally permitted to work. (14,43,48)

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 operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development	Enforces child labor laws, identifies child labor violations, and conducts workplace inspections. (14,43,44,49)
South Sudan People's Defense Force (SSPDF) Directorate for Child Protection	Prevents the recruitment of children into the army, monitors barracks, identifies child soldiers and assists with their release, investigates allegations of child soldiering, and provides training on children's rights to child protection officers and members of SSPDF. Headed by a Brigadier General, serves as liaison between SSPDF and the international community. (14)
Ministry of Interior's South Sudan National Police Services (SSNPS)	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (14)
Ministry of Justice	Oversees all courts and prosecutes violations, including those related to child labor. (14)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in South Sudan took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of MOL that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$11,000 (14)	\$68,138 (10)
Number of Labor Inspectors	13 (14)	14 (10)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (44)	No (44)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (14)	Yes (10)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (14)	N/A (10)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (14)	Yes (10)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	750 (14)	39 (10)
Number Conducted at Worksite	750 (14)	39 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (14)	0 (10)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (14)	N/A (10)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A (10)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (14)	Yes (10)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (14)	No (10)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (44)	Yes (44)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (14)	Yes (10)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (14)	Yes (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (14)	Yes (10)

In 2020, the Ministry of Finance and Planning agreed to provide the MOL with a budget of \$3,391 (600,000 South Sudanese Pounds) per month. While MOL allocated one-fifth (\$678) to its labor inspectorate, inspectors were paid sporadically. (10) MOL is authorized to retain 20 percent of the fees it collects for work permits and 20 percent of the fines it collects for labor law violations. This yielded approximately \$60,000 in retained fees and fines through the first 3 months of the year. (10) This amount is divided equally among the five directorates within the Ministry. (10) However, MOL lacked sufficient resources, including vehicles, to investigate labor complaints, including allegations of child labor. (10,14,49) Moreover, sporadic payment cycles incentivized some inspectors to pocket undocumented "fines." (14) There was also a high level of absenteeism among ministry staff, and salaries for civil servants in nearly every ministry were not paid for several months, further hindering the labor inspectorate's ability to enforce child labor laws. (9,14)

In 2020, labor inspectors were trained on the application of existing labor laws. (10,14) The labor inspectorate conducted three worksite inspections per week until March, when pandemic-related lockdowns were implemented and MOL suspended worksite inspections. Labor inspectors did not target the informal sector,

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private homes, or farms, in which child labor is known to occur. While child labor is known to occur in the informal sector, inspections were limited to the formal sector. (10) Moreover, labor violations were not referred to legal authorities as required by law. (10,14,43) Inspectors may issue a compliance notice to violators, but regulations do not specify penalties for infractions. Although statistics on the number of people in South Sudan’s labor force are unavailable, 14 labor inspectors may be insufficient to address the scope of the country’s child labor problem. (14,50,51)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in South Sudan took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Government of South Sudan that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inability to prosecute perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (14)	No (10)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (14)	N/A (10)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (14)	No (10)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (14)	Unknown (10)
Number of Violations Found	580 (14)	82 (10)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (14)	0 (10)
Number of Convictions	0 (14)	0 (10)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (14)	No (10)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (14)	Yes (10)

In December 2020, the government inaugurated the first Gender-Based Violence and Juvenile Court. This specialized court will provide dedicated and expedited trials of gender-based violence and juvenile cases, including labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (21) Due to the pandemic, international monitors maintained limited access to certain regions, and were therefore unable to verify alleged violations against children. These restrictions also slowed the verification and release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups in 2020. (40) During the reporting period, 57 former child soldiers were demobilized and reintegrated. (10,21,40) However, the government has not established a referral mechanism for other victims of the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.

South Sudan’s justice system faces enormous challenges, such as low capacity, insufficient funding, corruption, interference by the government and the SSPDF, insufficient training for law enforcement personnel, and a scarcity of judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. (14,19,52,53) Research indicates that prosecutors and law enforcement officials are not familiar with legal statutes regarding the worst forms of child labor. (9,19) As a result, police continued to arrest and imprison children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation rather than treating them as victims. (14,19)

During the first 6 months of the reporting period, the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 82 grave violations against children in the context of armed conflict and oversaw the release of 57 children from service in armed groups. In January 2020, the heavily armed forces of Thomas Cirillo’s National Salvation Front (NAS), a non-signatory of the 2018 R-ARCSS, raided homes in Western Equatoria state, abducting one girl and two boys. (10) The whereabouts of these children are currently unknown. In March 2020, CTFMR also verified the abduction of a 15-year-old boy by NAS forces in Central Equatoria state. His whereabouts are also presently unknown. (10) There is no indication that any of these violations resulted in arrests or criminal prosecutions. (10) Although both the 2017 Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and the August 2013 Punitive Order commit the SSPDF to hold its military officers accountable for the recruitment or use of children, the government has neither investigated nor prosecuted officers who allegedly committed such crimes. (16,19)

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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 efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Technical Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons	Oversees the implementation of the Palermo Protocol and policy development on anti-trafficking and smuggling of migrants. Members of the task force include the Ministry of Justice (co-chair), Ministry of Interior (co-chair), the National Security Service – Internal Security Bureau, the Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development (MOL), and the Ministry of Child, Gender, and Social Welfare. (23) The task force finalized a Terms of Reference with an action plan and completed the first phase of awareness-raising activities during the reporting period. The Ministry of Interior endorsed the task force in July 2020. (21) However, the government did not allocate a budget for the task force or other anti-trafficking activities in 2019–2020. (21)
South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC)	Oversees and coordinates the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former child soldiers, with the assistance of UN bodies by convening regular meetings with DDR stakeholders. (54) The commission includes members of the pro-Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army – In Opposition (SPLA-IO) and South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), along with parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). (14) Responsible for the negotiation of the release, screening, and registration of child soldiers; reunification with family when possible; and educational placement or vocational training. (16) In the context of child soldiers, the DDR Commission, working closely with UNICEF, maintains a network of local contacts (NGOs and community members) throughout the country who work to locate the families of rescued child soldiers, provide vocational training to them, and otherwise assist in their reintegration into civilian life. (10) In 2020, oversaw demobilization ceremonies resulting in the release and reintegration of 54 children. (10) The NDDRC is currently governed by the Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan Regarding Children Associated with Armed Conflict in South Sudan (Action Plan) signed on February 7, 2020, by all parties to the R-ARCSS. However, the government did not fund the NDDRC in 2020. The lack of funding significantly hampered efforts to identify child soldiers, obtain their release from military service, and help them reintegrate with society. (10)
UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR)	Screens and releases all children associated with armed groups, and reports on grave violations affecting children in armed conflict. Co-chaired by UNICEF, which leads child protection awareness and sensitization efforts within the SSPDF. (14,23,55) Under this framework, UNICEF coordinated the release of former child combatants in Unity, Western Equatoria, Central Equatoria, Jonglei, and Western Bahr el Ghazal states, along with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Child Protection Unit and NDDRC. (29) The CTFMR's Joint Verification Committee consists of SSPDF, SPLA-IO, SSOA, the Taban Deng-allied SSPDF, NDDRC, UNMISS, and UNICEF. (28) In the first 6 months of 2020, the SSPDF and SPLA-IO formally released 54 children (3 girls, 51 boys) from military service under the CTFMR. (10) The committee conducted child protection training for UNMISS personnel, and mobile units were deployed to remote areas and IDP camps to provide additional monitoring and verification training. During the first half of 2020, tCTFMR also conducted more than 40 child protection, induction, and mainstreaming and awareness-raising sessions targeting 7,603 participants. (10,14,56) Trainees included members of government-aligned and non-government-aligned armed forces, UN personnel, and community members. (10,41)
Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM)	Monitors compliance of R-ARCSS parties through its 12 Monitoring and Verification Teams (MVTs), which are located in 9 conflict-affected regions of South Sudan. (57) MVT units report all violations, including recruitment of child soldiers, to CTSAMVM headquarters in Juba. The mechanism supports NDDRC's mandate of reintegrating former child soldiers and children associated with armed groups into civilian life. (14,58) In 2020, assisted NDDRC in identifying and securing the release of at least 54 child soldiers. (10,14) Through October 2020, the Africa-EU Partnership provided CTSAMVM with \$6,063,850 (EUR 5 million). (59)
Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare (MGCSW)	Coordinates activities on children's rights and acts as the focal ministry for child protection. (14) MOL refers victims of the most egregious child labor violations to the MGCSW for rehabilitation and support services. (10) However, as no violations were uncovered, no victims were referred during the reporting period.

While the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC) coordinates efforts to address children in armed conflict, the government does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor, because the National Steering Committee on Child Labor has not been active since it was first constituted in 2012. It is unclear what proportion of the NDDRC's budget was dedicated to demobilizing and reintegrating child soldiers in 2020. (10,14) The Ministries of Labor, Interior, and Justice are responsible for enforcement of criminal laws against child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of children. However, their mandates are not clearly defined, further impeding effective government action. (9,14,21)

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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 funding and implementation of relevant policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (2018)	Replaces all components of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including the Joint Action Plan with the UN to Combat the Use of Child Soldiers, and reaffirms commitments made under the 2017 Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities. (24,60) Establishes the structure of a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and outlines actions to be taken by signatories, including prohibiting the recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed forces or militias, and stipulates that all civilian areas, including schools, shall be immediately demilitarized. (24) Although the release of some child soldiers occurred in 2020, the signatories continued to recruit or re-recruit children during the reporting period. (10,14,22)
General Education Strategic Plan (2017–2022)	Aims to improve access to and quality of education through grants and cash transfers to girls in upper primary and secondary schools, as well as payment of teachers' salaries. The Ministry of General Education and Instructions (MoGEI) implemented distance-learning programs that reached 1.5 million children during the reporting period. (61-63) In addition, UNICEF supported a General Education Annual Review to assess the progression of education against the General Education Strategic Plan's priorities and targets. (61-63) However, South Sudan's education sector is largely donor-subsidized, and sufficient funding was not allocated for the full 5 year period of the General Education Strategic Plan. (9,61)
Comprehensive Action Plan to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children in South Sudan†	Aims to prevent and mitigate grave violations against children, including the recruitment of child soldiers and attacks on schools. Applies to all state and non-state groups, and comes into force under the February 2020 transitional government. (10,25) Parties to the commitment include the SSPDF and Riek Machar's SPLA-IO, both of which were listed for child recruitment and use in armed conflict, as well as SSOA. (25) This document contains a list of concrete steps meant to "halt and prevent the violations against children in situations of armed conflict". The government cooperated with CTFMR to complete several of the first steps called for in the Action Plan, including standing up high-level and technical committees at the national level and convening monthly meetings of these committees. (10) The drafting process was supported by UNMISS and UNICEF, in collaboration with SSPDF. In 2020, the Defense Ministry coordinated with the SSPDF to integrate the Action Plan into its Civic Education Unit. (31,64)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, the government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Joint Program for Recovery and Resilience	Joint agreement between donors, USAID, UN agencies, local leaders, and NGOs that aims to re-establish access to basic services, including psychosocial support, education, and economic alternatives for children separated from armed groups. (4,65,66) The Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PFR) was inaugurated in Yambio in 2018, and programs in Torit, Wau, and Aweil were launched during the reporting period. (67) Aims to complete construction of seven primary schools; provide learning and teaching materials to all primary schools in the area formerly known as Gbudue State (reincorporated into Western Equatoria in February 2020); and ensure that 100 percent of children associated with armed groups are demobilized and reintegrated in their communities. (68)

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description
UNICEF and Donor-Funded Programs	Programs to improve educational access in areas affected by conflict. Includes Back to Learning (BTL), a State Ministry of Education, Gender, and Social Welfare-administered, UNICEF-funded program in Yambio and Bentiu that aims to address educational needs in conflict-afflicted areas and insecure states. BTL targeted 700,000 children in 2020, including girls and children living in pastoralist communities. (62,69,70) Following pandemic-related school closures in March 2020, UNICEF and MoGEI developed and implemented distance-learning programs. As of December 2020, UNICEF's radio-learning programs and television broadcasts allowed 1.5 million pre-school, primary, and secondary students to continue their education. (63) Moreover, 921,935 children were provided with essential learning supplies. (63) With the support of UNICEF's Education Cluster partners and MoGEI, schools were re-opened in October for candidate classes. By December, 1,700 schools reopened, allowing 110,000 children graduating from primary and secondary grades to sit for their exams. (63) UNICEF also trained 892 teachers on education-in-emergencies pedagogy during the reporting period. UNICEF's early learning, pre-primary, primary, or secondary education programs reached 248,456 children, 42 percent of whom were girls. (63,69) The organization delivered psychosocial support services to 95,487 children. (63) UNICEF also provided 983 unaccompanied and separated children with family tracing and reunification services. (63) Finally, Don Bosco and World Vision provided vocational training to demobilized child soldiers during the reporting period. In February 2020, 101 former child soldiers graduated from World Vision's vocational training program. (10)
Dallaire Initiative (2018–2021)	Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative-funded project (\$2.2 million). Aims to train 1,200 South Sudanese soldiers, police, and prison personnel on combating the use of children in armed conflict through behavior change. (17) In 2020, trained 187 security-sector actors (20 percent female) in the Dallaire Initiative Basic Training Course on preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers from a gender approach; trained 4,979 security-sector actors (26 percent female) in professional development aimed at preventing the use and recruitment of child soldiers; taught 956 instructors from the military and police forces to deliver training in child protection in field operations; executed memorandums of understanding with the SSPDF and the South Sudan National Police Services (SSNPS) to collaborate and assist with training, doctrine development, and awareness raising in preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers; and worked with two NGOs and a South Sudanese civil society organization to develop three curriculum packages on the recruitment and use of child soldiers from a gender-responsive approach. (10)
Alternative Education System	Aims to improve literacy and provide out-of-school populations an alternative to formal education. Includes: the Accelerated Learning Program, which implements the MoGEI program targeting children ages 12–18 who have reenrolled in lower primary classes. Also includes Community Girls' Schools, located in closer proximity to rural communities, and the Pastoralist Education Program, which targets children and adults in pastoral areas. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the programs during the reporting period. (61)
Measurement, Awareness Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAP 16) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor	The <u>MAP 16 Project (2016–2022)</u> , funded by USDOL and implemented by the ILO, aims to address knowledge gaps on child labor through research and data collection; the development of new survey methodologies; and capacity building programs. MAP 16 also supports partnerships to accelerate progress in combating child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking. (71) The project will likewise support regional and sub-regional initiatives to eradicate child labor and forced labor in Africa. (71,72) Completed work on a three-country study of forced child labor in conflict zones, including South Sudan, which is due to be published in 2021. (72) Additional information is available on the USDOL website .

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,19)

Although South Sudan has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in commercial sexual exploitation and child soldiering. In addition, the reintegration and rehabilitation services provided to child soldiers are insufficient to meet existing needs. (9,37,65,73)

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 South Sudan (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2020
	Ensure that the compulsory education age is consistent with the minimum age for work.	2013 – 2020
	Ensure that the worst forms of child labor are prohibited for all children under age 18 by law.	2017 – 2020
Enforcement	Ensure that labor regulations specify monetary penalties for all labor infractions, and that specified penalties are high enough to serve as a deterrent.	2019 – 2020
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to adequately enforce labor laws throughout the country, including in the informal sector; and collect and publish labor force statistics, which are necessary to calculate ILO labor inspector recommendations.	2016 – 2020
	Provide sufficient human and financial resources to ensure that labor inspectors carry out routine inspections, including targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to high-risk sectors and patterns of serious incidents; that detected violations are reported, as required by law; and that labor inspectorate staff are paid at regular intervals.	2012 – 2020
	Publish the data on initial training for new criminal investigators and refresher courses provided, number of criminal investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, and convictions secured, and prosecute all perpetrators of child labor.	2015 – 2020
	End state recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, including forced recruitment of children.	2020
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties.	2020
	Investigate, prosecute, and impose penalties on perpetrators; and ensure that penalties are sufficiently high to deter future offenders.	2013 – 2020
	Establish referral mechanisms between criminal law enforcement agencies and social services providers for victims of the worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2020
	Ensure that prosecutors and law enforcement officials are familiar with the prohibitions on the worst forms of child labor; are trained in implementing all laws related to child labor; and do not treat victims of commercial sexual exploitation as offenders.	2012 – 2020
	Ensure that the Child Act's minimum age of 18 years for voluntary military recruitment is enforced by ending all recruitment and use of children under age 18 by the South Sudan People's Defense Force, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Army – In Opposition, or associated militias.	2012 – 2020
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat all worst forms of child labor, and ensure mandates are clearly defined.	2013 – 2020
	Ensure that the Technical Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking and the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission are funded.	2020
Government Policies	Ensure that policies, such as the Joint Action Plan to Prevent the Use of Child Soldiers, Article 2.1.10 of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, and the General Education Strategic Plan, are adequately funded and fully implemented.	2012 – 2020
Social Programs	Conduct a national child labor survey, including research to determine the activities carried out by children, to inform policies and social programs.	2013 – 2020
	Ensure that children complete their primary education by resuming payment of teachers' salaries and subsidizing other school-related costs, and by withdrawing government forces from occupied schools.	2014 – 2020
	Improve access to education by addressing the lack of school infrastructure, including for pastoralist children; reducing school fees; and registering all children at birth.	2012 – 2020
	Increase the scope of social programs to reach more children at risk of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and child soldiering.	2012 – 2020
	Cooperate with child protection agencies, pursuant to Article 2.1.10 of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, to disarm, immediately release children in armed groups, and transfer them to appropriate social services providers. Ensure that the rehabilitation services provided to child soldiers are sufficient.	2014 – 2020

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