

In 2021, Fiji made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. In addition, the government launched the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and accompanying strategy and allocated financial and human resources to implement it. However, children in Fiji are subjected to the worst forms of child

labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Fiji's light work provisions are not specific enough to prevent children from being involved in child labor. In addition, social programs undertaken by the government are insufficient to support children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced domestic work. The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement or criminal law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Fiji are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (1-3) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Fiji. 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	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		108.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (4)

Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2022. (5)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Cutting† and harvesting† sugarcane (2,3)
	Fishing† and deep-sea diving† (2,3)
Services	Street work, including vending, washing cars, begging, and selling fruit and other foods (2,6,7)
	Domestic work (2)
	Working in garages, retail shops, or roadside stalls (2,3)
	Collecting scrap metal† (2,3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3,8-13)
	Use in the production of pornography (2,3,11,12)
	Forced labor in agriculture, begging, retail, and domestic work (1)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking and organized robberies (2,3,14,15)

† 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.

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During the reporting period, the Government of Fiji announced that it will work with UNICEF to conduct a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which includes a module on child labor. Although the Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR) collected data on child labor, it did not publish the information. (2)




Children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Fiji, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, including by family members, taxi drivers, foreign tourists, businesspersons, and crew on foreign fishing vessels. (1,2,10,12,13,16) Research also shows that children in Fiji are subjected to online commercial sexual exploitation, including child pornography. (11,13,17) Parents sometimes send their children to live with families in cities or near schools to facilitate their continuing education and to perform light household work. Research found that some of these children are vulnerable to involuntary domestic work or are forced to engage in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, or shelter. (1,16,18) Street children in Fiji are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, selling illicit drugs, and forced labor. (1,2,8,13,15,19) These vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters. (16)

The pandemic continued to profoundly impact students' access to education in Fiji, particularly affecting children from low-income families and single-parent families, as well as children with special education needs. School closures due to pandemic outbreaks and Tropical Cyclone Cody, which caused severe damages to critical structures for education, increased children's vulnerabilities to the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking. (2) Other barriers included access challenges for schools in remote areas, and telecommunication and internet connectivity issues that made it difficult for students to access online learning materials during the pandemic. (2)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Fiji has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

During the reporting period, the Government of Fiji ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. (2,20-23)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Fiji's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including identification of light work activities permissible for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 92 of the Employment Relations Promulgation (24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 40 of the Employment Relations (Administration) Regulations; Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (25,26)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6 and 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 20 and 21 of the Immigration Act; Articles 102, 103, 111, and 121 of the Crimes Decree (24,27,28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 91, and 256 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 2, 17–20, 22 and Schedule 2 of the Immigration Act; Articles 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (24,27,28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 225–227 of the Crimes Decree; Article 62A of the Juveniles (Amendment) Act (24,28,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 58 of the Juveniles Act (24,30)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (31)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (31)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Compulsory Education Orders 1997 and 1998 (32,33)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 31 of the Constitution of Fiji (34)

* Country has no conscription (31)

The Employment Relations Promulgation specifies the conditions under which children ages 13 to 15 may engage in light work, but does not include a list of activities that are permissible. (24)

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.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR)	Enforces laws related to child labor. Maintains a 24-hour phone line to accept reports of child labor and refers children to social services when appropriate. (2)
Employment Relations Tribunal	Adjudicates alleged violations of child labor provisions in the Employment Relations Promulgation. (2)
Fiji Police Force	Investigates criminal violations and enforces laws on the worst forms of child labor. (2) Maintains a Human Trafficking Unit and provides training to other police units focused on addressing human trafficking. (8)
Department of Immigration	Responsible for immigration services, refugee services, and efforts to address human trafficking. (2) Coordinates with the Fiji Police Force to investigate cases involving underage victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, which are then tried in the criminal court system. (35)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Enforces laws on child trafficking. (36)

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Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to address child labor.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (35)	\$4.5 million‡ (2,37)
Number of Labor Inspectors	45 (35)	Unknown (2)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	No (35)	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	843 (35)	Unknown (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	843 (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (35)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (35)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (35)	Unknown (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Unknown (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (35)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (35)	Yes (2)

‡ Funding is for August 2021 to July 2022.

Restriction measures in Fiji due to the pandemic have led to the closing of businesses, which impeded the government's labor law enforcement activities in 2021. The government did not provide information on labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (2)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to address child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (35)	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Convictions	0 (35)	Unknown (2)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (35)	Unknown (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (35)	Yes (2)

In Fiji, criminal authority agencies, including the Fiji Police Force, can refer children found in cases of the worst forms of child labor on a case-by-case basis to the Department of Social Welfare. The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (2)

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 the lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Coordinating Committee on Children (NCCC)	Coordinates child labor and child safety enforcement efforts. Comprises the Fiji Police Force, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Solicitor General's Office, the Department of Social Welfare, MEPIR, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and NGOs that work on child labor issues. (35) During the reporting period, NCCC held two meetings for consultation on the National Child Safeguarding Policy Work Plan. (38)
Interagency Network	Focuses on child labor issues at the district and provincial level. Monitors and reports cases of non-compliance. (39) Comprises interagency committees in nine towns in Fiji. (39) Research was unable to determine whether the Interagency Network was active during the reporting period.
Interagency Committee on Child Abuse	Investigates child labor cases, refers children to school, and monitors cases when a referral is made to the Department of Social Welfare. Shares information on child labor cases, including the worst forms of child labor. (2) Research was unable to determine whether the Interagency Network was active during the reporting period.
Interagency Task Force on Beggars	Addresses issues concerning children who beg and other exploited children. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Women, and Poverty Alleviation and the police regularly conduct patrols to identify and assist children. (40) Research was unable to determine whether the Interagency Task Force was active during the reporting period.
Interagency Working Group on Human Trafficking	Oversees the human trafficking case management system by providing guidance on referral procedures when a potential human trafficking case, including child trafficking, is identified. (41,42) Led by the Ministry of Defense, National Security, and Policing and the Office of the Prime Minister; comprising technical working groups with senior government officials and assisted by international partners and civil society organizations. (43) The Interagency Working Group on Human Trafficking was active during the reporting period. (1)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Addresses, develops, and implements strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. A multinational strategic framework program consisting of 14 South Pacific nations. (44) Activities during the reporting period were conducted under the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022). (2,45)
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and National Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy (2021–2026)†	Establishes oversight of anti-trafficking in persons operations and enhances the capabilities of law enforcement, including police, immigration, border security, and other regulatory bodies, to address the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and the use of children in the production of pornography as a result of human trafficking. (35,41,46,47) During the reporting period, the Fijian Cabinet formally endorsed the revised national action plan and accompanying strategy. In addition, the government allocated financial and human resources for implementation of the National Action Plan. (1,16)

† Policy was implemented during the reporting period.

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (2)

Fiji is a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7, which involves a commitment to accelerate action toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of child labor by 2025, and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. (48)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	Prioritizes children's rights including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. (45) During the reporting period, UNICEF worked with the Government of Fiji to conduct the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. (2) The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs also collaborated with UNICEF on a child protection program focusing on the rights for children of the indigenous iTaukei population. (38,49)
Education Assistance Programs†	The Free Education Grant provides 12 years of tuition-free education for children with Fijian citizenship in 904 eligible primary and secondary schools. Also provides bus passes to students, and boats and outboard motors for island communities with staff and students commuting to school. (17) The Food Voucher and Bus Fare Assistance program provides \$24 in food vouchers and subsidized bus fares to families with combined annual income of less than \$7,400 to offset the cost of education for children attending remote schools. (50) During the reporting period, the government continued to provide transport assistance to students, and allocated approximately \$31 million for the Free Education Grant in fiscal year 2021–2022. (2,37)
Child Protection Program and Allowance‡	Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) Child Protection Program that raises awareness of, and enacts recommendations from, the UN CRC. (17) MWCPA Child Protection Allowance assists single mothers, widows, and children. (51) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Child Protection Program and Allowance during the reporting period.
Trafficking Victims Rehabilitation Programs†	Homes of Hope is an NGO program that assists victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking. (17,51) During the reporting period, the government provided \$185,000 to women-focused institutions through the MWCPA to help victims of gender-based violence, including human trafficking and sexual abuse. (2)
Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor (MAP16)	\$105,000 USDOL-funded global project implemented by the ILO, which aims to strengthen policies and improve the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to address child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking through national, regional, and global initiatives. (52) In 2021, coordinated and facilitated trainings on child labor inspections, including in the informal sector and on the worst forms of child labor, in six divisions in Fiji with a total of 212 participants. (53) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.

† Program is funded by the Government of Fiji.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (2,35)

During the reporting period, MEPIR, the MWPCA, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the iTaukei Affairs Board, and the Fiji Police Force collaborated with the ILO to support a series of training and awareness seminars with a network of stakeholders to strengthen efforts to address child labor. The training programs were conducted in commemoration of the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor. (54)

Although Fiji has a program that targets child labor, the scope of this program is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including children who may be sent to live with other families and subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced domestic work. (1,17)

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 Fiji (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are specific enough to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish labor law enforcement information, including the number of labor inspectors, initial training for new labor inspectors, whether refresher courses were provided for existing labor inspectors, number of labor inspections conducted, number of labor inspections conducted at the worksite, whether routine inspections were targeted, number of child labor violations found, number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, whether routine inspections were conducted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2021
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2020 – 2021
	Publish criminal law enforcement information, including initial training for new criminal investigators, refresher courses for existing criminal investigators, number of investigations conducted, number of violations, number of prosecutions initiated, number of convictions, and imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2021
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and can carry out their intended mandates.	2021
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Child Protection Program and Allowance during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021
	Increase the availability of support services for children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced domestic work, in order to prevent them from being sent to live with other families.	2010 – 2021

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