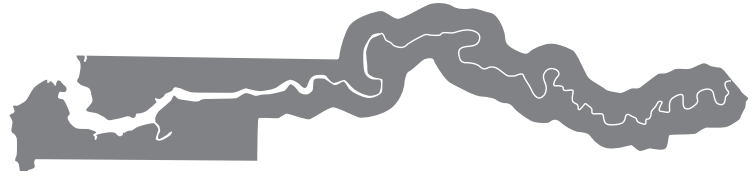


In 2021, The Gambia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted a new National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons, and it launched the National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants,



including the Victims of Trafficking. However, children in The Gambia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced begging. Gaps in the law remain, including that the minimum age for work is higher than the age of compulsory education. Although the government has adopted various policies addressing human trafficking, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor. In addition, labor inspectors do not inspect private homes or farms where children may be working.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in The Gambia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced begging. (1,2) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in The Gambia. 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	22.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	78.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	21.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		85.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2018. (4)

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 protecting crops against animals (1,5)
Industry	Working in carpentry, masonry, sewing, plumbing, and in metal welding workshops† (1,5) Mining† and quarrying† (6)
Services	Domestic work (1) Street work, including begging and vending (1,6-9) Scavenging for scrap metal at dump sites, markets, garages, and car parks (5,10) Working as attendants for commercial vehicles in the transportation sector (1,9) Working as auto mechanics† (1,5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,11,12) Forced begging by Koranic teachers (1,2,5,13) Forced labor in domestic work, farming, and street vending (2,5)

† 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.

In The Gambia, children are exploited in human trafficking and subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, and domestic work. Girls and boys from other West African countries are reportedly subjected to human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. (2,14) Research suggests that before the pandemic, foreign nationals subjected children to commercial sexual exploitation in the Tourism Development Area, which consists

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of the areas around major beaches, hotels, and nightclubs. (2,5,15-18) During the reporting year, the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry likely reduced the prevalence of child exploitation in the tourism sector. (5) In The Gambia, it is a common practice to send boys to receive education from Koranic teachers, or *marabouts*, who sometimes force students to engage in begging, street vending, and agricultural work. (1,13,14)

The Constitution and Gambian law mandate free compulsory primary and lower-secondary education. Families, however, are often responsible for transportation, supplies and uniforms, exam fees, and contributions to school funds. (13,19,20) Children with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing education. (5,13) In addition, inadequate classroom infrastructure, low numbers of teachers in rural areas, and limited access to clean water and toilets in schools create barriers for children to access education. (1,5,6,13,21,22)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Gambia 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 The Gambia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including that children may commence an apprenticeship in the informal sector at the age of 12, which is below the compulsory education age of 16.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Articles 2, 41, 45, and 47 of the Children's Act (23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 44 of the Children's Act; Articles 41, 46, and 47 of the Labor Act (23,24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 42, 44, and 45 of the Children's Act (23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 20 of the Constitution; Articles 2, 39-41, 47, and 58 of the Children's Act; Articles 2 and 28 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (19,23,25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 30, and 39 of the Children's Act; Articles 2, 28-29, 38(c), and 56 of the Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 13 of the Tourism Offenses Act (23,25,26)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 26, 27, 29-32, and 34 of the Children's Act; Articles 7-9 of the Tourism Offenses Act (23,26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 31 and 37 of the Children's Act (23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 59 of the Children's Act (23)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 59 of the Children's Act (23)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 31(c) of the Children's Act (23)
Compulsory Education Age	No	16‡	Article 18 of the Children's Act (23)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 30 of the Constitution; Article 18 of the Children's Act (19,23)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (19,23,27)

In The Gambia, children may commence an apprenticeship in the informal sector at the age of 12, which makes them vulnerable to engaging in child labor and not completing basic education. (23) Children in The Gambia are required to attend school up to age 16, but this standard makes children ages 16 through 18 vulnerable to child labor, as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. (23)

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
Department of Labor	Receives complaints about child labor. Conducts labor inspections in the formal sector, mediates disputes between employers and labor representatives, and refers serious cases to the labor courts and the Industrial Tribunal. (5) Housed under the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Regional Integration and Employment. (1,17)
Immigration Department Child Welfare Unit	Conducts unannounced inspections, including in marketplaces and restaurants. (5)
Children's Court	Adjudicates criminal, civil, and care and protection cases involving children. Coordinates with social welfare officers from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in the referral and care of children. (5,23,29)
National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP)	Under the purview of the Ministry of Justice, investigates suspected cases of human trafficking. Staff includes investigators, police, members of the National Intelligence Agency, and five prosecutors. (5,16,21,30,31) Gathers evidence for the NAATIP director, who can recommend that the NAATIP prosecutor file charges for human trafficking violations. (21) Conducts public awareness campaigns on human trafficking in tourist areas, schools, and border towns. (31) Trains law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors, social workers, hoteliers, and civil society organizations on child labor, child trafficking, and trafficking in persons. (2,28,31) Oversees a National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants, including Victims of Trafficking (NRM) in The Gambia. (30,32)
The Gambia Police Force Child Welfare Unit	Receives reports of child labor complaints and coordinates with NAATIP on investigations and prosecutions. (21) Oversees all situations involving children's welfare. Collaborates with the Child Protection Alliance (CPA), DSW, NGOs, and other agencies. (6,18,33) Oversees Child Welfare Units staffed by trained child welfare officers at all major police stations. (28)
Tourism Security Unit	Prevents unaccompanied children from entering tourist areas and patrols tourist areas for child labor and criminal violations, such as commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Has a dedicated child protection division comprising immigration, intelligence, police, and drug law enforcement officers. (2,18,34)
Local Enforcement Agencies	Monitor neighborhoods for child exploitation with support from DSW. Maintain Neighborhood Watch Groups established by DSW in urban areas near tourist resorts. (2,17,18,21) Serve as volunteer arbiters and mediators for community disputes involving children and other matters through Village Development Committees. (6) Raise awareness and report cases of labor issues, including child labor, to the authorities through 15 Community Child Protection Committees in operation throughout the country. (10,21,35)

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Reports indicate that the Neighborhood Watch Groups remain largely inadequate, as they are not empowered to monitor or report cases, are untrained, and only 2 out of the original 11 groups are even occasionally active. (2,18) In addition, the work of Child Welfare Units within the police and immigration departments is hampered by turnover, lack of resources, and limited capacity. (2) While volunteer-run Community Child Protection Committees under the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) are theoretically empowered to report cases of child labor, research indicates that they are largely inactive. (5)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in The Gambia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, the exceptionally low number of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in The Gambia may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$15,576 (1)	\$15,576 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	4† (1)	4 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (1)	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	5† (1)	4 (5)
Number Conducted at Worksite	5† (1)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (1)	5 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (1)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (1)	0 (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (5)

† Data are from January 1 to March 30, 2020. (1)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of The Gambia's workforce, which includes approximately 495,000 workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less-developed economies, The Gambia would need to employ about 12 labor inspectors. (36,37) While the labor inspectorates stopped conducting inspections in 2020 after the outbreak of the pandemic, inspections did resume in 2021. (1,5) Reports indicate that the labor inspectorate's funding was insufficient to implement its mandate and conduct a meaningful number of inspections. (5) In addition, although legally permitted to do so, inspectors do not inspect private homes or farms, where children may be working. (6,21,24)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in The Gambia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of enforcement of penalties.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (1)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (1)	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (1)	Yes (31)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (1)	Unknown (5)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (1)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (1)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (1)	Unknown (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (1)	No (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (5)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (5) Research indicates that penalties are not fully applied, possibly hindering enforcement and emboldening violators. (2,23,33,35) In August 2021, the government launched the National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants, including the Victims of Trafficking (NRM), which outlines a comprehensive procedure for responding to suspected cases of human trafficking. The NRM was developed in part with funding from the U.S. Department of State and in consultation with NGOs and the IOM. (31) The NRM defines standard operating procedures to identify human trafficking and ensure that survivors are protected, referred to social services, and provided access to justice. (31) In the reporting year, the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) held a 2-day training for officers in the Tourism Security Unit on identifying cases of human trafficking, including child trafficking. The officers learned about their responsibilities under the NRM and took part in mock screening interviews to identify victims of human trafficking. (5)

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 inactivity of some coordinating bodies during the reporting period.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Coordination Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates child labor enforcement processes, including prosecutions of the worst forms of child labor. Led by DSW and supported by UNICEF, comprises representatives from Department of Labor, UNICEF, DSW, NAATIP, Action Aid, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Gambia Teachers Union, Young People in the Media, and the Inspector General of Police. (1) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active in 2021.
National Trafficking in Persons Task Force	Coordinates the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Action Plan and shares information among law enforcement agencies. (1) Includes NAATIP, Ministry of Justice, Department of Immigration, DSW, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Women's Bureau, Gambia Radio and Television Services, The Gambian Tourism Board, Child Protection Alliance, Center for Street Children, The Gambian Armed Force, and The Gambia Police Force. (1) During the reporting period, met on a regular basis to discuss coordination, policy, and legislation on human trafficking issues. In addition, updated the National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons. (5,38)
Child Protection Alliance (CPA)	Civil society organization that promotes children's rights and child protection services. Members include government departments, civil society organizations, UN agencies, NGOs, child and youth organizations, and bilateral institutions. (1,18,39) Conducts joint programs with DSW and the Police Child Welfare Unit to identify children engaged in child labor. (18) Maintains 15 child protection centers across the country to monitor, identify, and report potential cases of child abuse and human trafficking. (18,21) Research was unable to determine which activities were undertaken by this coordinating body in 2021.
Department of Social Welfare (DSW)	Coordinates interagency efforts to address violations of child's rights, including child labor and child trafficking. (5,28,32) Housed under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. (5) Coordinates with the Department of Labor, the Police Child Welfare Unit, and other enforcement agencies to provide social services to child labor and child trafficking survivors. (5) During the reporting period, in collaboration with NAATIP, conducted awareness-raising activities on human trafficking. (31)
The Gambia Tourism Board	Coordinates efforts to prevent and address commercial sexual exploitation of children in tourist areas. (5) In the reporting year, coordinated with NAATIP and IOM to provide training on human trafficking to hospitality workers. (31)

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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 the lack of a national child labor policy.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons (2021–2025)*	Directs governmental efforts to address human trafficking. Includes strategies to improve legal framework, training of law enforcement and social services, prevention and awareness, and protection for human trafficking survivors. (38) During the reporting period, was updated and renewed for 2021–2025. (31)
The Gambia and Senegal Trafficking Memorandum of Understanding	Coordinates the two countries' efforts to address human trafficking through meetings, information sharing, improved laws, and prevention, protection, and assistance activities. (5) During the reporting year, the government continued to support this policy. (5)
Code of Conduct of The Gambia Tourism Authority for the Protection of Children	Raises awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry and among tourists. (18,40) During the reporting period, the government continued to support this policy, but the pace of training and implementation has slowed due to the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry. (5)

* Policy was adopted during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (21)

Although the government has adopted various policies addressing human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor.

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 of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
DSW Child Welfare Drop-in Centers†	Drop-in centers run by DSW with support from international organizations, foreign NGOs, and local businesses. Provide care, educational support, and counseling to child trafficking survivors, children removed from forced labor, street children, and children exploited by Koranic schools for forced begging. (5,18) Drop in centers were in operation during the reporting period. (5)
Conditional Cash Transfers to Islamic Religious Schools (<i>Majaalis</i>)†	Ministry of Education program in partnership with the Institute for Social Reformation, an Islamic NGO based in The Gambia, that gives Koranic teachers food rations and approximately \$2 monthly for each student if the Koranic teachers do not force students to beg. (5,17,21) Provides curriculum standards to Islamic schools. (5,39) Each month, a joint team of ministry officials and Institute for Social Reformation and Action representatives travels to each Koranic school participating in the program. (5) During the reporting period, 17 schools participated in the program, which has reached about 1,500 children. (5)
School Improvement Grant†	Covers the cost of stationary, books, and school uniforms for children in lower basic, upper basic, and senior secondary education. (39) This program continued during the reporting period. (5)
Education Sector Support Program	World Bank project implemented through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education with the aim of improving access to and quality of basic education. (39,42) Provides professional development and training to teachers to improve education quality, and funds the construction of new classrooms and the purchase of textbooks to improve access. Active in 2021. (42)

† Program is funded by the Government of The Gambia.

Child trafficking survivors may receive care from the government-run drop-in centers, privately operated institutions, or in their own residence as appropriate, and still receive government-provided resources regardless of the chosen option. (30,31) Although The Gambia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. Programs do not reach all children working in agriculture and domestic work or those vulnerable to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and street work. (5,21)

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 The Gambia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for workplace apprenticeships to age 16.	2017 – 2021
	Ensure that the age up to which education is compulsory is the same as the minimum age for work.	2020 – 2021
Enforcement	Ensure that local enforcement agencies, including Neighborhood Watch Groups and Community Child Protection Committees, are active, empowered, and properly trained to monitor and report cases of child labor.	2018 – 2021
	Publish information on the number of labor inspections conducted at worksites and whether routine inspections are conducted.	2021
	Increase the number of labor inspectors responsible for enforcing labor laws, including laws related to child labor, to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections.	2021
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate conducts inspections at private homes and farms.	2017 – 2021
	Ensure that criminal penalties for the worst forms of child labor are consistently applied to deter violations.	2016 – 2021
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement trainings, investigations, violations, prosecutions, and convictions.	2020 – 2021
Coordination	Ensure that labor law and criminal law enforcement agencies have sufficient funding to carry out their mandates.	2021
	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2018 – 2021
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2021
Social Programs	Ensure that children can complete compulsory schooling by subsidizing or defraying the cost of books, uniforms, transportation, and other fees.	2010 – 2021
	Enhance opportunities for children to access education by providing adequate teaching facilities and clean water, ensuring accessibility for students with disabilities, and increasing the number of teachers in rural areas.	2017 – 2021
	Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem.	2010 – 2021

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