

In 2021, India made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The State Government of Bihar issued the biggest recorded payout to survivors of the Muzaffarpur shelter home case, which involved the victimization of 44 girls between the ages of 7 and 17 for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, Indian authorities rescued 58,289 children from child labor during 2020-2021, an increase from previous years. In July 2021, the Anti-Human Trafficking Units in Telangana also rescued more than 2,500 children from child labor and streamlined the state's human trafficking prevention and rehabilitation processes. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, the government did not publicly release information on its labor law enforcement or criminal law enforcement efforts. Children in India are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in garment production, stone quarrying, and brickmaking. Hazardous work prohibitions do not include all occupations in which children work for long periods in unsafe and unhealthy environments, and penalties for employing children are insufficient to deter violations. There are also serious concerns about widespread corruption among police and other government officials related to the enforcement of child labor crimes, actively impeding the investigation and prosecution of such offenses, and mistreating victims. In addition, children continue to be abused in shelter homes that operate without sufficient government oversight or accountability.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in India are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1) Children also perform dangerous tasks in garment production, stone quarrying, and brickmaking. (1,2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in India.

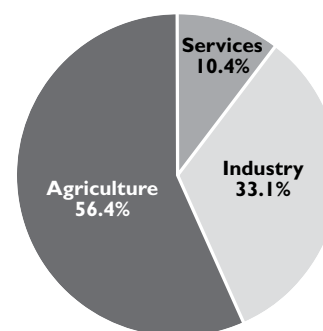
**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	1.4 (3,253,202)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	90.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	0.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Sample Survey Round 68 (NSS-R68), 2011–2012. (4)

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



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, including ploughing land, producing hybrid cottonseed and hybrid vegetable seeds, cultivating cotton and rice, harvesting sugarcane, tea, coconut, eucalyptus, and ginger, and performing peripheral work, such as removing weeds (1,2,5-8)
	Processing sugarcane, cashew nuts,† and seafood (6,9,10)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Manufacturing garments, weaving silk fabric and carpets,† producing raw silk thread (sericulture), spinning cotton thread and yarn, and embellishing textiles with silver and gold ( <i>zari</i> )† (1,2,7,11,12)
	Manufacturing glass bangles,† imitation jewelry, locks,† and brassware,† and polishing gems† (2,7,13-15)
	Rolling cigarettes ( <i>bidis</i> )† and manufacturing incense sticks ( <i>agarbatti</i> ), fireworks,† and matches† (7,16)
	Manufacturing footwear and bags, producing leather goods and/or accessories,† fans, toys, and stitching soccer balls (7,17-20)
	Producing bricks,† quarrying and breaking sandstone† and granite,† and mining and collecting mica† and coal† (1,2,7,21-27)
Services	Domestic work† (2,7,28,29)
	Working in restaurants, hotels, food service, and tourism services (1,7,25,30,31)
	Street work, including scavenging, sorting garbage, selling trinkets, and organized begging (1,2,7,21,25,32,33)
	Working in automobile workshops, and vehicle repairs (1,7,21,34)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in agriculture, including producing hybrid cottonseed and harvesting sugarcane (1,2)
	Forced labor in producing bricks, quarrying stones, and in rice mills (25,35,36)
	Forced labor in producing garments and carpets, spinning cotton thread and yarn, and embroidering silver and gold into textiles ( <i>zari</i> ) (1,11,25,35)
	Forced labor in producing bangles, imitation jewelry, leather goods, toys, fans, plastic goods, footwear, and bags (2,14,15,19,20,37)
	Forced labor in domestic work and begging (2,7,19,32)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,7,32)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (1,2,38)
Use in illicit activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, including the use of children to commit theft, traffic other children, and recruit other children for commercial sexual exploitation (7,39,40)	

† 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.

India is a source and destination country for child trafficking, especially of girls and child sex tourism. (35) Human traffickers fraudulently recruit Nepali and Bangladeshi women and girls in significant numbers to India. Some Indian and Nepali girls are forced to work as "orchestra dancers" until girls are able to pay off debts that are usually fabricated. (35) Human traffickers also exploit European, Central Asian, and African girls in commercial sex. (35) Within India, children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in agriculture and domestic service. (1,2) Girls as young as 14 are trafficked from states such as Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh for commercial sexual exploitation. Human traffickers charter buses from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Karnataka to transport migrant laborers, including children, from Bihar. (41,42) To avoid suspicion, human traffickers often ask parents to accompany children to their destination. NGO's intercepted several human trafficking operations in 2021, during which they found many children carrying false identification cards as proof of being the legal working age. (41)

Most labor trafficking is internal to the country, with the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha being major sources of trafficked children. (1,21) Children from India's rural areas migrate to urban centers or are trafficked for employment in industries such as spinning mills and cottonseed production, in which they are forced to work in hazardous environments for little or no pay. (25,35,43) Trafficked children are also employed on cotton farms and in home-based embroidery businesses, roadside restaurants, and brick kilns. (1) In addition, children are forced to work as bonded laborers in brick kilns and stone quarries to pay off family debts owed to moneylenders and employers. Children typically enter debt bondage along with their entire families. (1,2,21) Indian children are also used in forced labor, such as in mining and portering, by organized criminal groups and by their own families. (7)

Child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor are more likely to be from marginalized groups, such as low-caste Hindus, members of tribal communities, and religious minorities. (1,2,44,45) Though banned in 1988, the *jogini* system, in which girls as young as age 12 and from the lower castes are married to

a local deity and used as sex slaves, is still prevalent in some parts of India. (1,46) Prevalence data for the *jogini* system are lacking in India, though authorities believe that many hidden cases exist throughout the country. (46) Human traffickers sometimes kidnap children from public places, such as railway stations, entice them with drugs, and force girls as young as age 5 engaged in sex trafficking to take hormone injections to appear older. Both registered and unregistered spas exploit girls in sex trafficking, and the government lacks sufficient oversight of such establishments. (2,47,48)

Non-state armed groups reportedly recruit children as young as age 14 for use in direct hostilities against the security forces of Jammu and Kashmir. (2,38,49) Children are also forced by non-state armed groups in the states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand to handle weapons, improvised explosive devices, and serve as spies, couriers, and soldiers. (2,50,51) Maoist groups sometimes used children as human shields in confrontations with security forces. (2,50) Recent reports have indicated that at least 70 percent of Maoist cadres are forcibly recruited as children, with 20 percent of these children being forcibly sterilized. (52) In addition, some female child soldiers reported that commanders of non-state armed groups recruited and used them in part for sexual exploitation, including practices indicative of sexual slavery. (2)

Despite the enactment by Parliament in 2009 of a Right to Education Act that provides free and compulsory education for children below the age of 14, there are several barriers to educational access in India. Budgetary constraints contribute to the lack of schools, well-trained teachers, separate and sanitary washrooms for girls, adequate infrastructure, and transportation options, creating barriers and limiting access to education, particularly in overcrowded urban slums or *bastis*. (1,21) Furthermore, children from marginalized groups face additional barriers to accessing education. (1,21) Teachers sometimes subjected these children to discrimination and harassment. (1,53) Research has found that lower caste children in some schools are reportedly segregated in classrooms, sometimes resulting in higher dropout rates. (21,51) In addition, refugees who are not granted visas or provided identity cards by UNHCR often are not able to access education services. (21,25) Children up to the age of 14, rescued from child labor, can attend school, including the option to take vocational training. (32)

Restrictions to contain the COVID-19 pandemic required schools to remain closed until September 2021. Schools gradually reopened after an 18-month hiatus, but the damage to children's learning and educational experience has been significant and on par with global trends. (54,51) During the reporting period, classes were held online and the Government of India incorporated community radio stations and government-owned television to broadcast classes to children with connectivity issues to help increase accessibility to learning. (1,51) However, children from economically disadvantaged families and children in some rural areas were unable to attend classes due to a lack of Internet connectivity or lack of accessible devices. (1,55) Child advocates in India indicate an increase in child labor and child trafficking during the reporting period due to economic contractions related to the pandemic, with children dropping out of school to work in hazardous occupations. (34,56,51)

Between April 1 and May 25, 2021, at least 577 children lost both parents to the pandemic. (57,58) Children orphaned by the pandemic are vulnerable to exploitation for cheap labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Children are also at risk of being transported to smaller towns and rural areas, put up for scam adoption schemes, and recruited to work in factories, sometimes leading to situations of child labor or sex trafficking. (57)




The Government of India does not collect or publish data specifically on child labor, nor does it make available the raw data from the national census. (21,25)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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

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**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 India's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 3(1) of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (59)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 3A of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (59)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Schedule to the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act; The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (60,61)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2(g), 4, and 16-19 of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act; Sections 367-368, 370, 371, and 374 of the Penal Code; Section 79 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (62-64)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Sections 366A, 366B, 370, and 372 of the Indian Penal Code; Sections 2, 5, and 5A-5B of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act; Article 23 of the Constitution (63,65,66)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 366A, 366B, 370A, 372, and 373 of the Indian Penal Code; Sections 4-6 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act; Sections 13-15 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act; Section 67B of the Information Technology Act (63,65-68)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 76, 78, and 83(2) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act; Section 15-18, 20-23, and 32B(c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act (62,69)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Codified Military Rules (70)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Section 1(2) and 83 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (62)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Section 3 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (71)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 3 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (71)

\* Country has no conscription (72)

The Parliament enacted the Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code in September 2020. After delaying implementation through the reporting year, the new labor code was slated to take effect in 2022. (61) While the labor code stipulates that the central government will declare standards on a variety of matters,

including the prohibition of employment of children near cotton openers and the employment of children ages 14 to 18 on dangerous machines, the code only covers establishments with 10 or more employees, factories with 20 or more employees, and manufacturing facilities with 40 or more employees, leaving workers in smaller workplaces unprotected. (61) However, this code does not replace the Child Labor Act (CLA), which continues to remain a separate, enforced legislation that clearly prohibits employment of children. (51,60)

In June 2021, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) released a draft of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care, and Rehabilitation) Bill 2021 for public comment. (51,73) A previous bill under the same name was initially drafted in 2018 and passed the House, but was never introduced in the Senate. The 2021 version of the bill expands the scope of the 2018 bill and provides care and rehabilitation to women and children, including Indian citizens outside of India and trans persons, and it addresses gaps in the previous version of the bill. (73,74) The 2021 bill would also establish a National Anti-Trafficking Committee, a body responsible for enforcing the provisions of this legislation at the federal level, as well as a rule requiring reported human trafficking crimes to be fully investigated within 90 days. (73,74) The bill was originally slated to be brought to parliament for a vote during the July- August 2021 session, but was delayed. (51,75)

While India's existing legal framework governing child labor meets international standards on the minimum age for work, it is lower than the compulsory education age and children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (59,71) Despite evidence that children work for long periods in unsafe and unhealthy environments in spinning mills, garment production, and carpet making, the regulations governing children ages 14 to 18 in hazardous labor do not include these sectors. (7,60,76) In addition, sources report that the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into India's Armed Forces is age 16 and that individuals must be age 18 to be deployed, but research could not pinpoint these criteria in Indian law or regulation. (77,78) The Juvenile Justice Act (2015) imposes imprisonment and fines on non-state actors recruiting child soldiers; however, the act does not apply to the territory of Jammu and Kashmir where such practices are known to occur. (62)

### 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
State Government Labor Inspectorates	Conducts labor inspections, including inspections for child labor. Enforces child labor laws, including assessing penalties for violations found during inspections. (1) Refers children to Child Welfare Committees for protection and rehabilitation services. (62)
State and Local Police	Enforce laws pertaining to child labor and human trafficking. (76) Submit information to District Magistrates to determine whether a case should be prosecuted in District Court. (1) Refer children to Child Welfare Committees for protection and rehabilitation services. (62) The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) (also referred to as "Crime Branch") is a unit of the police force in each state. There are 36 CID's across India. (72,79)
Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) – Anti-Trafficking Operations Division – State and District-Level Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs)	Investigate cases of domestic and international human trafficking. (35,41,76) Reports to district police chiefs. (2) There are a total of 696 AHTUs in various States and Union Territories across India.
Central Bureau of Investigation – Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) and Anti-Human Trafficking Cells (AHTCs)	Investigate and prosecute cases involving the kidnapping and trafficking of women and children by professional gangs operating across multiple states at the district level. Take on cases by request of, or in agreement with, state governments. (2,80) Manage the 24-hour Helpline No. 011 for reporting cases of "Illegal Human Trafficking Especially Trafficking of Children & Women." (41,81) Similar to AHTUs, AHTCs provide intelligence gathering on human trafficking cases across the state. Each AHTC consists of an Assistant Commissioner of Police/Deputy Superintendent of Police officer, inspector, and sub-inspector. (51)
National Investigation Agency	Investigates terror-related cases. (25) Investigates and prosecutes trafficking in persons cases that have multiple state or international ramifications. (25,32,79,82)

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The Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) function at the district level and work within the local police department. Research has found that some AHTUs are effective in conducting investigations, providing evidence for cases, and empowering survivors. (51) In the wake of the pandemic, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) allocated \$13.3 million and directed the States and Union Territories to expedite the establishment of AHTUs covering all districts in India and upgrade the infrastructure of existing AHTUs to eliminate human trafficking. (83) State governments also dedicated financial resources to create and support fully functioning AHTUs in their jurisdictions. (51) India's largest state Uttar Pradesh had functional AHTUs in all 75 districts. In addition, the Odisha state government allocated a total of \$544,795 to strengthen the state's 37 integrated AHTUs, one in each of the 36 police districts and another in the headquarters of the state Crime Investigation Department. (51) Other funding allocation was also made for Anti-Human Trafficking Cells (AHTCs). (51)

However, a lack of resources and adequately trained staff has hindered the effectiveness of AHTUs across India. (2,84) Research was also unable to determine whether the AHTUs were set up and functional in all the states with allocated funding during the reporting period. (51) Reports show that the funding was mostly spent on infrastructure (e.g., offices, desks, buildings) and awareness programs, rather than human trafficking investigations. (2) During the reporting period, the state of Andhra Pradesh issued an order to establish 10 more AHTUs in the state, but NGO staff on the ground allege that no progress has not been made to set up AHTUs since the MHA's declaration. (85)

A distributional study from 2010-2019 conducted by an NGO based on Right to Information indicated that only about 27 percent of AHTUs across India were fully functional. (86-88) It also noted that 49 percent of India's AHTUs operate with significant funding deficits, and the remaining 32 percent (approximately 225) AHTUs as not operational and exist only on paper. (2,86-88) Police officers assigned to an AHTU unit reportedly sometimes view these positions as less favorable and these positions are sometimes occupied by near-retirees or officers with poor performance. (2,51)

The enforcement of labor laws is overseen by the state governments' labor ministries, while criminal law enforcement is overseen by the state police. Labor law enforcement officers typically coordinate with the state police on cases through the Office of the District Magistrate. (25)

In 2021, when some states sought approval from the national government to suspend labor laws to mitigate the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, the government mandated that child and bonded labor laws continue to be actively enforced. (89) In May 2021, the MHA re-issued the Standard Operating Procedures to strengthen law enforcement against the exploitation of women and children, and issued advisories to states to closely monitor human trafficking to ensure that the pandemic did not result in human trafficking expansion. (21,89) In December 2021, the National Committee to Protect Child Rights held a workshop attended by officials from state-level Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights, officers from AHTUs, NGOs, the Department of Labor, and other representatives to enhance coordination on child protection efforts, including rescuing children from human trafficking. (51)

### **Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in India took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the state government labor inspectorates that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws, including training for labor inspectors.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (61)	Yes (61)



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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (21)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (21)	Yes (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (21)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (21)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (61)	Yes (61)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (21)	Yes (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (21)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (21)	Yes (1)

The government did not publicly release information on its labor law enforcement efforts. While the number of labor inspectors is unknown, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of India's workforce, which includes over 471.3 million workers. (90) According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, India would need to employ roughly 31,420 labor inspectors. (90) The government also does not release disaggregated data on the specific budget for inspections, but government officials claim that inspectors have sufficient office facilities, transportation, fuel, and other necessities to carry out inspections. (21) However, the ILO and NGOs report that training for labor inspectors is inadequate, that the number of labor inspections carried out is insufficient given the size and population of the country, and that the response time to complaints is too long. (1,25,91)

Yearly data on the number of inspections are not available. The Government of India's Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) reported that during 2014-2020, 1.63 million inspections were carried out, resulting in 10,720 prosecutions and 4,153 convictions. (51) Due to the ongoing pandemic, NGOs claim that the number of labor inspections have further declined. (1) NGOs commended Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu for proactive inspections, while noting that the response time is too long. Labor rights groups and trade unions alleged that inspections are often conducted ineffectively. (1) In 2021, labor inspectors received virtual training on laws relating to child labor. However, data on the number of inspectors who received training are not available. (1) In addition to not providing data on inspectors and training, the national government also failed to provide data on the number of inspections conducted, violations found, and the number of violations for which penalties were imposed and collected. (1,21)

Penalties under the 2016 Child Labor Act (CLA) include imprisonment for a minimum of 6 months up to 2 years and fines ranging from \$300 to \$700 for hiring children under the age of 14. (25,66,92) However, current available penalties and levels of enforcement are insufficient to deter employers from hiring children, as imprisonment is rare and maximum fines are infrequently levied. (1,59) While the CLA and the rules framed under this act empower labor inspectors to assess penalties and monetary fines for child labor law violations, research has found that penalties assessed do not deter child labor law violations as labor inspectors do not impose the maximum permissible penalty amount, even though there are no barriers to assessing penalties. (1)

State government labor inspectors plan and conduct labor inspections, which are generally targeted at specific sectors or geographical areas known to involve child labor. In 2019, under the Ease of Doing Business Reform Plan, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry established the State Reform Action Plan that included several reform points, including consolidating labor inspections with other types of business inspections. (51,93) While reforms do not apply to inspections under the CLA, states such as Telangana have since witnessed a decline in

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the number of inspections carried out to identify child labor. Reporting indicates that the decline is due to a lack of regular inspections of business establishments. (51,94)

During the reporting period, authorities continued to respond to corruption in labor inspections and enforcement primarily through state and local Anti-Corruption Bureaus (ACBs). In 2021, media reporting in Rajasthan highlighted work by the ACB to hold three labor officers responsible for accepting bribes. (51,95) In Karnataka, an ACB also conducted anti-corruption raids and investigations into the Bengaluru Labor Department. However, for both cases, research was unable to determine whether the labor officers were also responsible for enforcing child labor laws. (51)

### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in India took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws, including the lack of data on federal and state government efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict crimes involving 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 (21)	Yes (51)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (21)	N/A (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (21)	Yes (1)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (21)	Unknown (1)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (96)	Unknown (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (96)	Unknown (1)

The Government of India did not respond to requests for information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (1) During the reporting period, the Women Safety Wing of the Telangana state government streamlined the state's investigative process to prevent human trafficking and provide care for survivors. (97) On August 2, 2021, the Government of India confirmed an increase in the number of children rescued from illegal work in 2020-2021, from 54,894 to 58,289. (51) In July 2021, AHTUs in Telangana also rescued more than 2,500 children from forced child labor. (51,98) In January 2022, 1,801 children engaged in bonded labor in brick kilns, begging, street work, and other activities were rescued by the Telangana State Police under Operation Smile Phase 8. (99) In the state of Assam, police rescued 40 children who had recently been trafficked to Sikkim. Officials noted that in June and July of 2021, there were at least 107 women and children from Assam that had been rescued after human trafficking attempts. (100)

In late 2021, the National Investigation Agency filed charges against various international human trafficking rings across the country. Charges were brought against 13 Bangladeshi nationals in Bengaluru, 6 Indians from Tamil Nadu in Mangaluru with human trafficking connections in Sri Lanka, and 4 Bangladeshis for human trafficking-related offenses to the Rohingya community. All human trafficking charges included the smuggling of women and children into the country. (101,102) In March 2022, the sub-divisional magistrate in Narela helped rescue 73 child laborers from polishing, toy, and fan manufacturing factories in North Delhi. The children were trafficked from the neighboring state of Uttar Pradesh with promises of decent work and monthly pay. (20)

In addition, Telangana opened an online portal to curb human trafficking through public awareness and education. In 2021, the Telangana Women Safety Wing conducted training for all police personnel to create awareness of sex trafficking, child labor, "cyber trafficking", and the appropriate application of preventive detention for accused human traffickers. (51)



Even with apprehension and effective enforcement carried out by some district-level AHTUs, India's prosecution rate of suspected traffickers remains low with relatively few convictions. (51) AHTU members continue to express disappointment with unsuccessful prosecutions of accused human traffickers. (97) According to the most recent data available on human trafficking from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), in 2020, 1,714 cases involving suspected human trafficking crimes were filed across India. In 2020, the government reported identifying 3,799 human trafficking victims, including 2,200 children under the age of 18, and 2,837 victims were registered under the Bonded System Abolition Act (BSA). (51) However, courts completed trials in only 27 percent of the cases and convicted a mere 10.6 percent of those charged with human trafficking crimes. (103) Research was unable to determine how many of these prosecutions involved child victims. (103) NCRB data indicate that convictions under the Child and Labor Law also remain low. (104) In 2020, the government completed prosecution in 463 trafficking in persons cases, convicted 101 human traffickers in 49 cases, and acquitted 715 suspects in 414 cases. During the reporting year, the acquittal rate for trafficking in persons cases was 89 percent. (51)

Research found apprehending child traffickers has become more challenging for law enforcement as human traffickers increasingly utilize technology to reach customers and to receive electronic payments, eliminating the need to be centrally located in physical locations, such as brothels. (35,32,41) Reports indicate that both registered and unregistered spas exploit girls in sex trafficking, and the government lacks sufficient oversight of such establishments. (2) In some cases, law enforcement officers do not apprehend human traffickers, including brothel owners, in exchange for bribes and sexual services from victims. (2) Recent reports allege that in states such as Assam, West Bengal, and Jharkhand, police are ordered by state officials to register human trafficking cases as kidnappings to reduce the official number of human trafficking survivors. (2) Government officials and police officers regularly accept bribes and sexual services from human traffickers in return for protection from prosecution, and reports of police refusing to register First Information Reports (FIRs) against accused officials and alerting human traffickers of forthcoming raids also continued during the reporting period. Tamil Nadu state authorities, for example, acknowledged that some local politicians benefited with impunity from child sex trafficking and forced begging rings. (2,32,35,79) In addition, victims of human trafficking faced mistreatment from the police; law enforcement authorities did not utilize existing procedures to screen for human trafficking survivors, and authorities arrested, fined, penalized, and deported some child trafficking survivors for crimes their human traffickers compelled them to commit. (2,105)

Although India banned bonded labor in 1976 with the (BSA), implementation of the law has been minimal and authorities continued to misidentify bonded labor crimes as labor law crimes or minimum wage violations. (2,21,79,106) Police did not always arrest suspects or file FIRs to officially register a complaint, including in at least half of national bonded labor cases. Furthermore, research has found that politically connected individuals across multiple states successfully avoided prosecution, including local and state politicians who held workers in bonded labor on agricultural or brick kiln sites. (2) There continues to be a lack of victim identification, and a widespread tendency to handle bonded labor cases administratively in lieu of criminal prosecution and stall bonded labor prosecutions. (2,21,35,79) The number of convictions against bonded labor crimes is low, and when prosecutions for bonded labor crimes do occur, acquittals are common due to inadequate preparation, court backlogs, and a lack of case prioritization. (107,108) According to the latest data from the NCRB, as of 2020, over 1,500 bonded labor cases remained pending in court for up to 3 years. (109) In 2020, 2,933 total cases went to trial under the BSA; however, 2,875 cases were still pending at the end of the year. (116) Data show that among the 57 cases that completed trial in 2020, only 16 convictions were achieved, whereas 40 cases were acquitted. (110) Of India's 36 states and territories, 21 reported not identifying any bonded labor victims or filing any cases under the BSA in 2019, an increase from 17 states in either 2017 or 2018, despite NGO and media reports of bonded labor victims identified in some of those states. (2)

By the end of the reporting period, the Governments of the National Capital Territory and Delhi, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu all issued standard operating procedures (SOPs) to cover survivors of bonded labor, child labor, begging, and sex trafficking. However, other state governments lacked similar procedures, sometimes

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failed to recognize bonded labor cases, and often did not issue release certificates or provide more than the initial financial assistance to bonded labor victims. (2,32,111) When child bonded labor victims were identified, the penalties assessed to the convicted child traffickers were insufficient to deter violations. (2) Since 2016, a new policy has increased reparations for bonded labor survivors, but the government has failed to pay full compensation to anyone freed. (107) Rescued bonded laborers are currently entitled to \$4,458 (300,000 *Rupees*). (107) Reports indicate that employers trap more than 60 percent of survivors back in bonded labor after they are freed. (2)

While state police have primary responsibility for criminal law enforcement, access to training varies from state to state. States, in coordination with the national government, offered trainings for new and veteran law enforcement agents during the reporting period. Topics of these trainings included identification, rescue, and rehabilitation of child labor and bonded labor survivors. (51) Cases on the trafficking of minors for commercial sexual exploitation are heard in Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act Courts. In 2018, the Department of Justice approved a scheme to establish 1,023 fast-track special courts (FTSCs) for rape and POCSO Acts. Among the FTSCs, 389 courts are exclusively dedicated to POCSO cases. (112) As of December 2021, 383 POCSO FTCs have been set up. (113) However, as of December 2020, 99 percent of cases under the POCSO Act were pending in court. (109) State authorities also report that judges and prosecutors at POCSO courts do not have training or expertise in POCSO crimes. To address this, the Madhya Pradesh police academy signed an MOU with an NGO that allowed for 1,900 police, prosecutors, and judicial officers to be trained on human trafficking. (35) In addition, four states have implemented child-friendly courtrooms or procedures, including some that allowed victims to testify via video conference. This improved victim participation in cases and helped to prevent the re-traumatization of child victims. (2) However, some victims have refused participation in the trials due to inadequate implementation of victim protection measures and legal assistance. (35)

Out of approximately 9,000 government-run, government-funded shelters for vulnerable individuals, including children, roughly 1,300 were not officially registered with the government, operating illegally and with little oversight. (114) A dearth of investigations into human trafficking crimes and the sexual and physical abuse of human trafficking victims at government-run and private shelters has reportedly encouraged a sense of impunity for shelter employees. (2) Moreover, some human trafficking survivors remained in state-run shelters for an extended time due to a lengthy repatriation process. (2) In 2019, after the discovery of the Mazaffarpur shelter case, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) under the order of the Supreme Court conducted a state-level audit of shelter homes that housed 256,000 children. NCPCR found that at least 40 percent of all shelters lacked mechanism to protect children from physical and sexual abuse. (2,115) In addition, staff members lacked proper training to recognize signs of abuse and to alert the authorities. (2) Research was unable to determine whether any action has been taken since that time to train shelter staff and implement mechanisms to protect children from abuse.

In January 2022, the Government of Bihar issued record compensation to the survivors of the Muzaffarpur shelter home case, for which the government obtained numerous convictions in 2020 under the POCSO Act and Juvenile Justice Act related to the victimization of 44 girls between the ages of 7 and 17 for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. According to the statement released by the National Human Rights Commission, each girl was awarded between \$4,000 to \$12,000, which is the biggest recorded payout for sexual abuse survivors in India. (116) When the Muzaffarpur case came into light in 2018, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) investigated 16 additional shelter homes in Bihar and concluded similar patterns, but only pursued court action against individuals associated with the Muzaffarpur shelter. In early 2022, the Supreme Court of India ordered the state of Bihar to submit a report on actions, if any, taken against state officers per the earlier recommendations of the CBI. (117) Research also found that other illegal shelter homes continued to operate outside of Bihar during the reporting period. (118) In 2021, similar reports of sexual assault of minor girls in a shelter home run by a government-approved NGO emerged in Jharkhand, where girls as young as age 16 were found to be victims of psychological and sexual exploitation; 40 children from the shelter home

were relocated. (119,120,118) In Kolkata, police rescued 20 children from an adoption home, where 10 people were allegedly accused of running a child trafficking racket. (118,121) The adoption home was run by a top civil servant's family member, and a senior government official is also charged with abuse of children at the facility. (121,118)

#### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Task Force to Implement the Child Labor Act (CLA)	Coordinates the oversight mechanism to ensure effective implementation of the Child and Adolescent Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act. Led by the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) and comprises 12 officials from the federal and state governments. (122) Met once during the reporting period, issuing instructions to all states to closely monitor child labor issues and ensure continued enforcement of the CLA, especially in the wake of pandemic-related economic distress. (1)
Central Advisory Board on Child and Adolescent Labor	Convenes board members to review the implementation of existing legislation and programs related to child labor and proposes new welfare measures for child labor. Chaired by MOLE and comprises 45 board members, including government officials and NGO representatives. (123) The board met once during the reporting period but research was unable to determine the outcome of the meeting. (1)
National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)	Ensures that all laws, policies, programs, and administrative mechanisms are in accordance with the constitutional protections for children and the UN CRC. Conduct inquires about child rights violations and failures to properly implement laws relating to child protection. (124) State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights have also been established in all 29 states and in 6 territories, including Delhi. (125) The NCPCR met several times during the reporting period to review issues related to child labor and the launch of a new online portal ( <i>Baalswaraj</i> ) used to track children engaged in street work and those that have been orphaned during the pandemic. (1)
National Human Rights Commission	Monitors implementation of the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act. Monitors state governments' actions to identify, release, and rehabilitate bonded laborers through quarterly submissions and exploratory and investigative missions. (126) During the reporting period, the Commission issued an advisory to all states on protecting child rights. (1)
Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labor Portal	Allows government officials, NGOs, and law enforcement to share information and coordinate on child labor cases at the national, state, and local levels. Mole-operated online portal which attempts to improve enforcement of child labor laws and the implementation of the National Child Labor Project (NCLP) Scheme. (127) Allows citizens to submit child labor complaints online. (1,25) Incorporates a child tracking filing system to enhance enforcement of child labor laws. (1) Since the online platform was launched in 2017, 191,418 child laborers have been identified and 111,380 children removed from child labor and rehabilitated through STCs. Currently, 52,271 children are enrolled in STCs. (1)

During the reporting period, senior leadership from the Assam government, law enforcement, and political parties participated in an anti-trafficking in persons conclave in Guwahati. This event was organized by Shakti Vahini, a non-profit organization, and the U.S. Consulate General in Kolkata to raise awareness about human trafficking among lawmakers and political leadership at both the state and national level. (51,128)

Local-level Child welfare Committees are supported by the State Ministries of Women and Child Development. They advocate for care, protection, development, treatment, and rehabilitation of at-risk children, and provide basic needs and human rights protection. (1)

#### 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 a lack of action by some states to establish action plans to eliminate child labor.

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**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Policy on Child Labor (NPCL)	Describes actions for addressing hazardous labor for children, including implementing legislation and providing direct assistance to children. (129) Implemented through programs operated by MOLE and the Ministry of Women and Child Development, including the National Child Labor Project (NCLP) Scheme, Grants in Aid, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), the National Children's Fund, and the National Creche Scheme. (25,79,130,131) All NPCL schemes were functional during the reporting period. (70) The projects and schemes within the national policy helped rehabilitate thousands of children from child labor and provided group care to children of working parents. (1,70)
National Plan of Action for Children	Identifies priority actions for achieving the objectives set out in the National Policy for Children (NPC). (25,132,133) Aims to establish bridge courses and age-appropriate classes for children rescued from child labor and child trafficking to meet the NPC objective to ensure that all out-of-school children have access to education. In addition, seeks to develop community-based prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration mechanisms, and strengthen institutional mechanisms to address the worst forms of child labor to meet the NPC objective that all children are protected from exploitation. (132,133) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the national action plan during the reporting period.
State Action Plans on Child Labor	Detail state governments' activities and programs to eliminate child labor. CLA plans are in place in only 11 states: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Orissa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. (70,78,111,134-141) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the national action plan during the reporting period.

According to reports, the budget for the National Child Labor Project under the National Policy of Child Labor (NPCL), which is meant to rescue and rehabilitate child laborers, has decreased for the second year in a row. From fiscal year 2018–2019 to fiscal year 2020–2021, the allocation for the project has been reduced by half- from \$12 million (Rs. 90 crore) to \$5.4 million (Rs. 41 crore)- impacting the provision of essential services for rescued children. (142) The NCLP scheme helps connect rescued child laborers to education and skills programs. (142)

The Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi's "Policy on Rehabilitation and Combating Trafficking of Women and Children," which would establish a rehabilitation fund for women and children who were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and establish state- and district-level coordination committees to undertake prevention and rehabilitation activities, remains pending in draft form. (70,111,143,144)

## 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 oversight of government-run, government-funded, and privately-run shelter homes that provide assistance to survivors of the worst forms of child labor.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
National Child Labor Project (NCLP) Scheme† Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)†	MOLE program that operates at the district level to identify working children, withdraw them from hazardous work, and provide them with education and vocational training. (7,130) Sets up and administers NCLP schools, mainstreams children into formal education, and provides them with stipends, meals, and health checkups. (130) Comprises approximately 3,000 NCLP Special Training Centers' (STCs) that accommodate approximately 120,000 children. (130) STCs are located across the country and provide children with a stipend, free meals, and vocational training, and bridge gaps in education for eligible children. Length of stay ranges from 6 to 18 months. (79) From April 2020 to March 31, 2021, the NCLP project removed and rehabilitated 58,219 children from child labor. (1) The National Crèche Scheme is running 5,705 crèches (child care centers). (70) Of children between the ages of 6 months and 6 years, 64.9 million have benefited from the ICDS scheme. (70)

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

Program	Description
Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) Programs - Integrated Child Protection Scheme†, Childline†, TrackChild and Khoya-Paya†	Integrated Child Protection Scheme provides children in need of protection—including children withdrawn from hazardous work, forced labor, and human trafficking—with food and accommodations in government-run shelter homes and non-institutional care in foster homes and with adoptive families. (35,25,32,131) Provides rehabilitation and reintegration services to rescued children. (131) Through the Welfare of Working Children in Need of Care and Protection program, provides non-formal education and vocational training to street children and working children living in urban areas not covered by NCLP schemes. (131) MWCD also operates ChildLine, a 24-hour toll-free emergency telephone service for children in distress in cities across India. (32,35,131,145,146) The telephone service connects children in need of assistance with hospitals, Child Welfare Committees, shelter homes, and police; 60 to 70 percent of received calls result in the rescue of a child. (32,79,131,146) By March 2021, ChildLine service was operating in 598 districts, including child helpdesks in 141 railway stations and 5 bus stops. (147) During the reporting period, Childline fielded 5 million calls and assisted 39 million children, including children who are survivors of child labor. (147) MWCD also operates TrackChild, an online portal that tracks missing children and facilitates information sharing about missing and vulnerable children among stakeholders, including child protection units, police stations, and Child Welfare Committees. (35,25,131,148) TrackChild's <i>Khoya-Paya</i> (Lost and Found) website allows parents and the public to report and search for missing children. (25) Since the program's inception, the program has matched 279,692 children with their families. (149) The program was operational during the reporting period. (1)
Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Laborer†	MOLE program that rescues and rehabilitates adult and child bonded laborers. (25,130) Provides rescued bonded laborers with financial assistance and social protection services. (130) Supports funding of surveys at the district level on the prevalence of bonded labor and the rehabilitation of bonded laborers identified through the surveys. (150) From April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, MOLE distributed \$137,000 among 7 states for the rehabilitation of bonded laborers. (1) Research was unable to determine how the released funds were utilized on the state level.
Anti-Human Trafficking Activities†	MWCD-operated anti-human trafficking activities, in collaboration with NGOs and state governments. (151) Supports projects to help reintegrate, rehabilitate, and repatriate human trafficking survivors, including children, through the <i>Ujjwala</i> and <i>Swadhar Greh</i> schemes. (151) <i>Ujjwala</i> is a comprehensive scheme launched in 2007. Responds to trafficking in persons of women and children, including for commercial sexual exploitation. (35,151) Operates 104 shelters. (149) In addition, facilitates the rescue of survivors, places them in safe custody, provides rehabilitation services, facilitates reintegration of survivors, and facilitates repatriation of foreign survivors. (151) The <i>Swadhar Greh</i> scheme provides temporary residential accommodations and services, including vocational training, legal aid, and rehabilitative counseling services to women and girls rescued from human trafficking, including commercial sexual exploitation. (32,151) Operates 362 shelters. (149) For 2020–2021, the central government allocated \$1.6 million for the program, which is yet another decrease from the \$2.03 million allocated in the first 5 months of 2019–2020, and from \$3.18 million allocated to the program in the first 5 months of 2018–2019. (35,149) MWCD also allocated approximately \$13 million towards setting up and strengthening new AHTUs in all districts across the country. A total of approximately \$12.3 million of those funds have been released. (149)
Work in Freedom Project II (2018-2023)	Partnership program developed between the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and ILO on Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East. Aims to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking and forced labor of women and girls across migration pathways leading to the care sector and textiles, clothing, leather, and footwear industries. (152) Addresses key drivers and vulnerabilities of human trafficking, such as gender and other forms of discrimination, distress migration, and poor working and living conditions, through an integrated prevention strategy of targeted social protection and empowerment; fair recruitment practices; and evidence-based policy advocacy for decent work options. (152) For more information, see the ILO website.
Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAPI6) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO to conduct research and develop new survey methodologies, improve awareness, strengthen policies and government capacity, and promote partnerships to eliminate child labor and forced labor. (153) In India, the project works in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh to promote coordination of programs for child laborers and their families, build capacity of state and local governments to address child labor, and build the knowledge base on child labor. During the reporting period, the project reviewed approximately 55 schemes and programs and developed recommendations for bundling different benefit packages to specifically target families with children in child labor. (153) The program also raised awareness on child labor issues through campaigns and road shows. (154) For additional information, please see the USDOL website and the ILO website.

† Program is funded by the Government of India.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor

State governments in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, two of the states where the *jogini* system is most prevalent, are making efforts to end the *jogini* practice. Telangana's State Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has identified the *jogini* system as a priority and requires district-level reporting on its prevalence while undertaking steps to expand support and rehabilitation services for its survivors. (51) NGOs report that Andhra Pradesh has made some progress in addressing the *jogini* system and supporting survivors. In addition, the state and national government funds research into the prevalence of the *jogini* system and support programs designed to rehabilitate survivors. (51)



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The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights launched the Baalswaraj Portal to track and assist children orphaned by the pandemic and street children. In June 2021, the Prime Minister announced government funding for children who lost parents and legal guardians to COVID-19, including higher education scholarships and monthly stipends. (51) In June 2021, the Ministry for Women and Child Development urged states to ensure children were brought under government safety nets including protecting children from child labor. (51)

Similar to government-run, government-funded shelter homes, both *Ujjwala* and *Swadhar Greh* homes, which are privately funded, have high rates of non-registration. Due to a reported loophole in the law, if the government did not act on a home's application in a prescribed timeframe, the organization applying would automatically gain licensure. (2) Research indicates that some corrupt officials purposely missed the licensing deadline to allow inadequate but politically-connected organizations to gain licensing. (2) Furthermore, audits of *Ujjwala* and *Swadhar Greh* homes documented that many homes violated minimum hygiene and safety standards, did not provide psychosocial support or educational opportunities, and operated without proper registration. (2) Moreover, in some instances the homes functioned as hostels and offered non-survivor residents for accommodations for a fee. Due to unsafe conditions coupled with alleged abuse by caretakers, authorities reported multiple instances in which children ran away. (2) Research was unable to determine whether the Government of India has taken action to close the loophole on the shelter homes' application timeframe and licensure.

The Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Laborers was updated during the reporting period. The updated scheme raises the limit of assistance from \$250 (Rs. 20,000) to \$380 (Rs. 30,000) and provides an option to include additional funds, up to \$1,200 (Rs. 1 Lakh), in annuity. (155) The new scheme was implemented on January 27, 2022. However, research was unable to determine whether the scheme has been effective in rehabilitating bonded laborers. (155) Recent media reports have suggested that as of April 2022, some rescued laborers have yet to receive compensation as part of the scheme. (156)

## 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 India (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children under age 18 are prohibited, including in sectors in which children work in unsafe and unhealthy conditions for long periods of time, such as in spinning mills, garment production, carpet making, and domestic work.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally that prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups applies to all regions in India, including Jammu and Kashmir.	2016 – 2021
	Publish the legal instrument that establishes the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into India's armed forces.	2018 – 2021
Enforcement	Ensure that the number of labor inspectors in India meets the ILO's technical advice and that there are a sufficient number of inspectors trained and responsible for providing enforcement of child labor laws in all provinces.	2021
	Ensure that the Anti-Human Trafficking Units, including those pending in Andhra Pradesh, are fully established.	2021
	Ensure that all Anti-Human Trafficking Units are operational and receive sufficient funding and human resources to adequately perform their work. Make certain that funding extends beyond infrastructure reforms and is directed to anti-human trafficking efforts.	2019 – 2021
	Collect and publish national-level data on labor law enforcement, including the amount of funding for the labor inspectorate, the number of labor inspectors, the number and type of inspections conducted, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2014 – 2021



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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure adequate training for labor and criminal law inspectors, that an adequate number of labor inspections are conducted, that labor inspections are regularly conducted in all sectors in which child labor occurs, and that the complaint mechanism response time is efficient.	2019 – 2021
	Enforce laws related to bonded labor and labor trafficking under the Bonded Labor System Abolition Act.	2021
	Ensure that bonded labor cases are fast tracked and that state governments are issuing release certificates and provide financial assistance for bonded labor victims, including full compensation for those freed from bonded labor.	2021
	Ensure that politically connected individuals on the local and state level face prosecution for holding agricultural and brick kiln workers in bonded labor.	2021
	Collect and publish national-level data from all state governments on criminal law enforcement efforts, including trainings for criminal investigators, the number of criminal investigations, the number of violations found, the number of prosecutions initiated, and the number of convictions.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that penalties are imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor, and that a reciprocal referral mechanism exists between criminal authorities and social services.	2021
	Ensure law enforcement officials who mistreat human trafficking survivors or delay or jeopardize cases face proper disciplinary action.	2021
	Ensure that law enforcement officials investigate child labor crimes and register First Information Reports in a timely manner, including for cases involving bonded labor.	2021
	Consistently impose penalties that are sufficiently costly as to meaningfully deter child labor law violations.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure that public officials who facilitate or participate in the worst forms of child labor are held accountable, including officials who accept bribes in exchange for protection from the law.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that there is implementation of survivor protection measures in courts and ensure that judges and prosecutors at Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act courts have adequate training or expertise on crimes involving the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2020 – 2021
	Investigate suspected abuses and misconduct at government-run and government-funded, and privately-run shelter homes, and ensure that all shelter homes are registered and subject to adequate oversight, have mechanisms in place to protect children from physical and sexual abuse, and that all staff members receive adequate training on how to recognize and report signs of abuse.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that law enforcement agencies have adequate technological and financial resources to respond to technological tools used by human traffickers.	2020 – 2021
	Increase prosecution rates for human trafficking cases and seek adequate sentencing following convictions.	2021
	Coordination	Ensure coordination mechanisms exist between the local police and AHTUs, including for transferring human trafficking cases to the correct unit.
Government Policies	Encourage states and territories that do not currently have action plans for the elimination of child labor to establish such plans.	2011 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement National Plan of Action for Children and State Action Plan and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period	2018 – 2021
Social Programs	Ensure equitable and broad access to education by providing adequate financial resources dedicated to remote learning assets and penalizing education officials who engage in discrimination and harassment of children.	2014 – 2021
	Reduce barriers to education, in particular for refugee children and children from marginalized communities, by providing sufficient training for teachers, providing separate and sanitary washrooms for girls, and increasing the number of available schools, especially in rural areas in which inadequate infrastructure and transportation options limit access to education.	2021
	Ensure that data on exploitative child labor are collected and findings made available to the public, including findings from district-level bonded labor surveys and raw data from the national census.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that <i>Ujjwala</i> and <i>Swadhar Greh</i> shelter homes meet registration guidelines for gaining licensure, including by acting on applications within the prescribed timeframe.	2021
	Ensure that shelter homes are safe and not operating as hostels, including by providing accommodations to non-survivor guests.	2021

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