

NO ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT COMPLICIT IN FORCED CHILD LABOR

In 2021, South Sudan is receiving an assessment of no advancement. Despite initiatives to address child labor, South Sudan is assessed as having made no advancement because it demonstrated complicity in the use of forced child labor. Military forces continued to recruit children, sometimes forcibly, to fight opposition groups. Otherwise, the government made efforts by supporting the Justice for Children initiative, which refers victims of child labor to special courts that have judges who are trained on how to adjudicate cases involving minors. The South Sudan People's Defense Force also launched a mobile general martial court in Jonglei and Upper Nile to commence trials for 60 suspected perpetrators of crimes against civilians, including children. Furthermore, the Ministry of General Education and Instructions, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund and the United States Agency for International Development, distributed 15,498 solar powered radio sets to 70,718 vulnerable school children that facilitated lesson access during the first quarter of the year while schools remained closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children in South Sudan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including use in armed conflict, and forced labor in cattle herding. The government did not hold perpetrators of child labor accountable and has yet to ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. In addition, police continued to arrest and imprison children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation rather than treating them as victims.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in South Sudan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including use in armed conflict, and forced labor in cattle herding. (I-6) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in South Sudan.

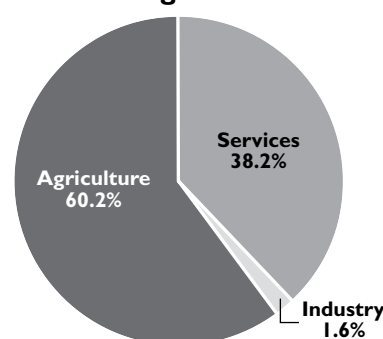
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

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

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (7)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Fifth Housing and Population Census, 2008. (8)

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



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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming activities (2,9)
	Cattle herding† (9)
	Gathering firewood (9)
Industry	Construction, † including building and transporting materials (10)
	Rock breaking† (9)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Making bricks (9,11)
	Gold mining,† including carrying soil and panning (9,12,13)
Services	Domestic work (9)
	Street work, including vending, polishing shoes, delivery cart pulling, preparing tea, selling black market gasoline, and ticket taking for group transport companies (9,13)
	Working in hotels, restaurants and tea houses (2)
	Collecting scrap metal and empty bottles (10)
	Working in slaughterhouses, including transporting livestock and meat (10)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in brickmaking, cattle herding, gold mining, domestic servitude, and market vending (9,14)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9,14,15)
	Forced recruitment of children by state and non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (6,9,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

The 2018 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) mandates the release and reintegration of child soldiers by all armed groups. (16,17) In 2020, signatories to the R-ARCSS agreed to extend a UN Action Plan to end and prevent all grave violations against children, including the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, through August 2022. During the reporting period, this agreement has generally held, reducing the recruitment of children by armed groups and allowing representatives on the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission, which is the lead body for identifying child soldiers and children associated with armed forces and armed groups to secure their release and facilitate their reintegration into civilian life. (9,18) Despite this commitment, evidence suggests that the South Sudan People’s Defense Force (SSPDF), the national army of South Sudan, continued to forcibly recruit children in 2021. (4,6,19,20)

Since the onset of civil war in December 2013, government and opposition forces have recruited more than 19,000 children. (16,21) Many former child combatants have since been released or are no longer classified as children. (16,22) Although the number of grave violations continued to decline in the first half of 2021, reports indicate a significant increase toward the last half of the reporting period due to the escalation in conflicts between various armed groups in Tambura (Western Equatoria) and Yei (Central Equatoria). (3-5,23,24) During the reporting period, both government and non-state armed groups, including the SSPDF and Sudan People’s Liberation Army – In Opposition (SPLA-IO), recruited and used children as young as age 12, sometimes forcibly. (9,19,23,24) The UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified the recruitment and use of 129 children between the ages of 12 and 17. Perpetrators also included a range of opposition groups, including forces loyal to General James Nando, forces loyal to General Moses Lokujo, the South Sudan National Police Service, the South Sudan Opposition Alliance, and the National Salvation Front. (23,24) In some instances, local commissioners are known to carry out recruitment drives on behalf of the state’s National Security Services and the SSPDF. (14,19,25)

In Warrap, elements of South Sudan’s National Security Services and SSPDF leverage a cattle extortion scheme to procure children and young men of fighting age. Non-signatories to the ceasefire, including Paul Malong’s South Sudan United Front and the National Salvation Front, also forcibly abduct children from their homes, schools, and communities. (16,19,22,26) Children affiliated with non-state armed groups perform active combat roles, perpetrate violence against civilians, and recruit other children. They also collect firewood, oversee checkpoints, and carry out other support roles, including as cooks, porters, spies, and bodyguards to senior officers. (14,27)

Children are subjected to rape and sexual slavery by armed elements; some are forced to serve as “wives” of commanders and members of armed groups. (9,28) This sexual exploitation has political and commercial elements because it is used as in-kind payment for fighters. (2) Reports indicate that persistent flooding, for the third consecutive year, and intercommunal conflict led to continued increase in child marriages and child labor

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during the reporting period. Poor families exchanged their young daughters for a bride price or as restitution following intercommunal conflict. (9) Reports further indicate that girls forced into marriages as compensation for interethnic killings may subsequently be subjected to sexual slavery or domestic servitude by their husbands and in-laws. (14)

An even greater number of children fight as part of local community defense forces. (21) Of the 10,000 children engaged in tending cattle throughout the country, many are sometimes used in armed cattle raids by other tribes. (9) Children abducted by armed pastoralists may be forcibly incorporated into heavily militarized cattle rustling networks. Older boys are forced to work as soldiers, herders, or cattle rustlers. (2) Younger children tend to smaller livestock, and teenagers serve as auxiliaries for armed pastoralists or self-defense groups. (21,22) Among certain tribes, cattle raiding marks a rite of passage to adulthood. (21,22) Non-state groups often use children released from armed groups for cattle raiding or intercommunal violence once the children arrive back in their villages. (9)

As of December 2021, South Sudan hosted approximately 2 million IDPs, with 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees living in neighboring countries. These groups, including orphaned children, are at an increased risk of human trafficking and other forms of labor exploitation. (13,15) UNICEF has registered more than 26,000 unaccompanied minors since the onset of the conflict. These children are particularly vulnerable to abduction for forced labor or commercial sex. (25,26,29,30) South Sudan has never conducted a comprehensive child labor survey, so information about sectors in which child labor occurs is unavailable. (16)

Research suggests that border closures and restrictions on regional travel to contain the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in human trafficking, as criminal networks exploited unofficial entry points. Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Eritrean business owners recruited and exploited their compatriots who entered South Sudan, including girls who were forced into domestic servitude. (15) Children employed in hotels, restaurants, and construction are forced to work for little or no pay, and some are subjected to sex trafficking. (15) Girls in rural areas, meanwhile, who gather firewood or collect water are also at risk of violence and sexual exploitation. In gold mining regions, children work alongside their families in artisanal mining operations, especially in the Kapoeta area of Equatoria. (9) An estimated 7,600 children are employed in mining, shops, and other work in the informal economy in Kapoeta. (2) There is anecdotal evidence of children selling a drug known as “Five,” a street name for Diazepam, a benzodiazepine. The drug is imported from Uganda and sold and consumed by children on the streets. (2)

Ongoing fighting hindered the government's ability to deliver aid, provide education, and address the worst forms of child labor. (9,16,27) South Sudan's out-of-school rate is one of the highest in the world, with an estimated 1 in 13 children expected to complete a full cycle of primary education. The government does not enforce school attendance, and the majority of children have left school before age 13. (13,25,27,28) In 2020, before the onset of the pandemic, South Sudan's out-of-school population reached a record 2.8 million. Conflict, flooding, and the pandemic, among other shocks, led to additional school closures. (9) Reports indicate that since March 2020, when schools closed due to the pandemic, most schools in the country have yet to re-open. (9) Furthermore, many children are not able to attend school, because their parents cannot afford to pay unauthorized fees that schools and government officials demand. (9) Although these fees are unlawful, the government lacks the capacity to address the issue, and often perpetrates it. This practice disproportionately impacts girls, because families with multiple children, who cannot afford to pay additional fees to cover all children, prioritize educating sons. Underage marriage also prevents girls from attending school. (9)

South Sudan's education sector is chronically underfunded. Public school teachers are paid sporadically, leading to low morale and frequent absenteeism. (2,16) Teacher salaries remain unpaid, contributing to high teacher attrition. (9,13) In addition, ongoing military operations in conflict-affected areas have forced teachers to flee. Armed groups, including government forces, continue to occupy schools in contested areas, although school occupations have decreased significantly in recent years. (2,16) In 2021, armed groups occupied 14 schools and 1 hospital. SSPDF forces occupied schools in Yei, Central Equatoria and Nimule, Eastern Equatoria. (9)

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Although the Constitution and the Child Act provide for free primary education, in practice, many families must contribute school fees to pay teacher salaries and other related costs, which may be prohibitive. (25,27,31) In addition, children in pastoralist communities generally lack access to schools, materials, or teachers. (21)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

South Sudan has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

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

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

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 12 of the Labor Act; Article 25(3) of the Child Act (32,33)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 12 and 13 of the Labor Act; Articles 22(3), 24(1), and 25(1) of the Child Act (32,33)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 25(2) of the Child Act (32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 10(1) and 13(2)(a) of the Labor Act; Articles 277–279 of the Penal Code; Article 13 of the Constitution (33-35)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 13(2) of the Labor Act; Articles 22(3)(b), 119 and 120 of the Child Act; Articles 276 and 278–282 of the Penal Code (32-34)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 13(2)(b) of the Labor Act; Articles 22(3)(c), 22(3)(d), 22(4), and 25(2)(m) of the Child Act; Article 276 of the Penal Code (32-34)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 13(2)(c) of the Labor Act; Article 24(1) of the Child Act; Article 383(3)(d) of the Penal Code (32-34)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 31(1) of the Child Act; Section 22 of the Sudan People's Liberation Army Act (32,36)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 31(1) of the Child Act; Sections 20 and 22(2) of the Sudan People's Liberation Army Act (32,36)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 31(1), 31(2), and 32 of the Child Act (32)
Compulsory Education Age	No	13	Article 9.1(b) of the General Education Act; Article 14(1) of the Child Act (32,37)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 6(a) of the General Education Act; Article 13(4)(b) of the Labor Code; Article 14(1) of the Child Act; Article 29.2 of the Constitution (32,33,35,37)

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There are no regulations governing the Labor Act's implementation. In accordance with the Labor Act, the Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development (MOL) is responsible for issuing regulations to implement key elements related to child labor, including the number of hours and conditions for light work, the exceptions under which children age 16 and 17 may perform hazardous work, and a complete list of hazardous work. (1,33) Drafting regulations will require cooperation between MOL and the Ministry of Justice. (16)

Children are required to attend school only until age 13. This standard makes children between ages 13 and 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor because they are not required to be in school but are also not legally permitted to work. (6,32,33)

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, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in South Sudan may impede the enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development (MOL)	Enforces child labor laws, identifies child labor violations, and conducts workplace inspections. (9,16,32,33)
South Sudan People's Defense Force (SSPDF) Directorate for Child Protection	Prevents the recruitment of children into the army, monitors barracks, identifies child soldiers and assists with their release, investigates allegations of child soldiering, and provides training on children's rights to child protection officers and members of SSPDF. Headed by a Brigadier General, serves as liaison between SSPDF and the international community. (16)
Ministry of Interior's South Sudan National Police Services	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (9)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Oversees all courts and prosecutes violations, including those related to child labor. (9)

In 2021, the Ministry of Justice assisted with a UNICEF-funded initiative in South Sudan named Justice for Children. This initiative refers victims of child labor to special courts in which judges are trained on how to adjudicate cases involving minors. (9)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in South Sudan may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$68,138 (2)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	14 (2)	12 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (33)	No (33)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (2)	N/A (9)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (2)	No (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	39 (2)	0 (9)
Number Conducted at Worksite	39 (2)	0 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (2)	0 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (2)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (2)	Unknown (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	No (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (2)	No (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (33)	Yes (33)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	No (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (9)

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During the reporting period, the Ministry of Finance and Planning did not provide any regular funding to the MOL for activities. The Ministry is authorized to retain 20 percent of the fees it collects for work permits and 20 percent of the fines it collects for labor law violations. (9) The MOL divides the revenue from work permit fees between the five directorates within the Ministry to pay for basic necessities such as utilities and some salaries, as well as additional payments for employees. However, since the MOL stopped conducting labor inspections at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, it lost the labor-law violation revenue stream and was unable to resume inspections in 2021 due to lack of funding. (9)

In addition, the MOL lacked sufficient resources, including vehicles, to investigate labor complaints, including allegations of child labor. (1,38) There is also a high level of absenteeism among ministry staff, and salaries for civil servants in nearly every ministry were not paid for several months, further hindering the labor inspectorate's ability to enforce child labor laws. (1,16)

In 2021, labor inspectors were trained on the application of existing labor laws. (9) While labor inspectors in South Sudan cannot assess penalties, they are authorized to issue citations; however, regulations do not specify monetary penalties for infractions. Labor inspectors can also refer cases to the police and any violations to the Labor Act, including child labor violations, can carry criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to 5 years. (9,33) Furthermore, although statistics on the number of people in South Sudan's labor force are unavailable, 12 labor inspectors is likely insufficient to address the scope of the country's child labor problem. (6,39)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in South Sudan took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal law enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including inability to prosecute perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (2)	No (9)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (2)	N/A (9)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (2)	No (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (2)	1 (9)
Number of Violations Found	82 (2)	129 (9,24)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (2)	0 (9)
Number of Convictions	0 (2)	0 (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (2)	No (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (9)

During the reporting period, the government initiated an investigation of a potential human trafficking case involving youths from Kapoeta, Eastern Equatoria State being trafficked to Uganda. (6)

The first Gender-Based Violence and Juvenile Court was inaugurated in 2020. This specialized court provides dedicated and expedited trials of gender-based violence and juvenile cases, including labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (15) However, the existing five Justice for Children courts in South Sudan have not been staffed due to underfunding. (9)

Due to the pandemic, international monitors maintained limited access to certain regions, and were, therefore, unable to verify alleged violations against children. These restrictions also slowed the verification and release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups in 2021. (40) Furthermore, the government has not established a referral mechanism for other victims of the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.

In 2021, reports indicate that the CTFMR and South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC) and partners helped secure the release of seven children from armed groups. (9) The

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SSPDF and SPLA-IO forces released 44 children between February 2020 and February 2021. Although both the 2017 Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and the August 2013 Punitive Order commit the SSPDF to hold its military officers accountable for the recruitment or use of children, the government has neither investigated nor prosecuted officers who allegedly committed such crimes. (14,41,42)

South Sudan’s justice system faces enormous challenges, such as low capacity, insufficient funding, corruption, interference by the government and the SSPDF, insufficient training for law enforcement personnel, and a scarcity of judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. (14,43) Reports indicate that prosecutors and law enforcement officials are not familiar with legal statutes regarding the worst forms of child labor. (1,14) As a result, police continue to arrest and imprison children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation rather than treating them as victims. (14)

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 a lack of efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Technical Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons	Oversees the process of ratifying the Palermo Protocol and policy development on anti-trafficking and smuggling of migrants. Members include the Ministry of Justice (co-chair), Ministry of Interior (co-chair), the National Security Service – Internal Security Bureau, MOL, and the Ministry of Child, Gender, and Social Welfare. (44) The government did not allocate a budget for the task force or for other anti-trafficking activities in the 2021–2022 budget. (9)
South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC)	Oversees and coordinates the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former child soldiers, with the assistance of UN bodies by convening regular meetings with DDR stakeholders. (45) Includes members of the pro-Machar Sudan People’s Liberation Army – In Opposition (SPLA-IO) and South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), along with parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). (16) Responsible for the negotiation of the release, screening, and registration of child soldiers; reunification with family when possible; and educational placement or vocational training. (41) In the context of child soldiers, the NDDRC, working closely with UNICEF, maintains a network of local contacts (NGOs and community members) throughout the country who work to locate the families of rescued child soldiers, provide them with vocational training, and otherwise assist in their reintegration into civilian life. NDDRC is currently governed by the Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan Regarding Children Associated with Armed Conflict in South Sudan, which was signed on February 7, 2020, by all parties to R-ARCSS. (2,9) In 2021, NDDRC oversaw demobilization ceremonies resulting in the release and reintegration of seven children and implemented the Comprehensive Action Plan by establishing Child Protection State Technical Committees in all states. (9) Although the government allocated funds to NDDRC in the 2021–2022 budget, NDDRC never received these funds because the government failed to pass the budget before the end of December 2021. (9)
UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR)	Screens and releases all children associated with armed groups, and reports on grave violations affecting children in armed conflict. Co-chaired by UNICEF, which leads child protection awareness and sensitization efforts within SSPDF. (16,44,46) Under this framework, UNICEF has coordinated the release of former child combatants in Unity, Western Equatoria, Central Equatoria, Jonglei, and Western Bahr el Ghazal states, along with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Child Protection Unit and NDDRC. (47) CTFMR’s Joint Verification Committee consists of SSPDF, SPLA-IO, SSOA, the Taban Deng-allied SSPDF, NDDRC, UNMISS, and UNICEF. (48) During the reporting period, the committee conducted 2 capacity-building trainings on the implementation of the Comprehensive Action Plan for 60 senior military officers and all division commanders from all parties to R-ARCSS. (4) Furthermore, 13 knowledge and skills-based trainings were provided to 526 members of security forces, including SSPDF, the South Sudan National Police Service, the National Security Service, and SPLA-IO. (23)
Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM)	Monitors compliance of R-ARCSS parties through its 12 Monitoring and Verification Teams (MVTs), which are located in 9 conflict-affected regions of South Sudan. (49) MVT units report all violations, including recruitment of child soldiers, to CTSAMVM headquarters in Juba. The mechanism supports NDDRC’s mandate of reintegrating former child soldiers and children associated with armed groups into civilian life. (16,50) CTSAMVM provided general support for the disarmament and demobilization process during the reporting period. (13)
Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare (MGCSW)	Coordinates activities on children’s rights and acts as the focal ministry for child protection. (16) MOL refers victims of the most egregious child labor violations to MGCSW for rehabilitation and support services. (2) However, as no violations were uncovered, no victims were referred during the reporting period. (9)

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While the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC) coordinates efforts to address children in armed conflict, the government does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor, because the National Steering Committee on Child Labor has not been active since it was first constituted in 2012. (9) The Ministries of Labor, Interior, and Justice are responsible for enforcement of criminal laws against child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of children. However, their mandates are not clearly defined, further impeding effective government action. (15)

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 insufficient funding.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (2018)	Replaces all components of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including the Joint Action Plan with the UN to Combat the Use of Child Soldiers, and reaffirms commitments made under the 2017 Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities. (17,51) Establishes the structure of a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and outlines actions to be taken by signatories, including prohibiting the recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed forces or militias, and stipulates that all civilian areas, including schools, shall be immediately demilitarized. (17) Although the release of some children occurred in 2021, signatories continued to recruit or re-recruit children during the reporting period. (9)
General Education Strategic Plan (2017–2022)	Aims to improve access to and quality of education through grants and cash transfers to girls in upper primary and secondary schools, as well as payment of teachers' salaries. However, South Sudan's education sector is largely donor-subsidized, and the government did not allocate sufficient funding for the full 5-year period of the General Education Strategic Plan. (1,52) The Ministry of Education committed to funding capitation grants for primary schools but has not followed through on its commitment. (13) In 2021, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of General Education and Instructions (MoGEI), distributed 15,498 solar powered radio sets to 70,718 vulnerable school children. (9,53) The sets facilitated lesson access provided through local radio stations during the first quarter of the year while schools remained closed due to the pandemic. In addition, the USAID-supported Education Cannot Wait and Global Partnership for Education distributed school supplies, including kits for early childhood development, recreation, and for students, as well as bars of soaps and buckets to 1,825 schools during the reporting period. (53)
Comprehensive Action Plan to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children in South Sudan	Aims to prevent and mitigate grave violations against children, including the recruitment of child soldiers and attacks on schools. Applies to all state and non-state groups, and came into force under the February 2020 transitional government. (2,18) Parties to the commitment include SSPDF and Riek Machar's SPLA-IO, both of which were listed for child recruitment and use in armed conflict, as well as SSOA. (18) This document contains a list of concrete steps meant to "halt and prevent the violations against children in situations of armed conflict." (2,18) In line with the plan, SSPDF launched a mobile general martial court in Jonglei and Upper Nile states to commence trials for 60 suspected perpetrators of crimes against civilians, including children. Moreover, the Plan's first implementation report was submitted by the National Technical Committee to the High Level Interministerial committee. (5) R-ARCSS signatories agreed to extend the plan through August 2022. (9)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

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

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Joint Program for Recovery and Resilience	Joint agreement between donors, USAID, UN agencies, local leaders, and NGOs that aims to re-establish access to basic services, including psychosocial support, education, and economic alternatives for children separated from armed groups. (54-56) The Partnership for Recovery and Resilience was inaugurated in Yambio in 2018, and programs in Torit, Wau, and Aweil were launched in 2019. (57) Held a virtual conference in 2021 entitled "Communities responding to COVID-19 in complex shock environments." (58)
UNICEF and Donor-Funded Programs	During the reporting period, UNICEF provided training in Juba, Bor, and Weil on the 2017 Labor Act and the 2008 Child Act for police, MOJ officials, and judges assigned to the juvenile courts. This was the first training ever for some of the officials who had handled these issues for years. (9) UNICEF also helped Government of South Sudan officials develop further training guidelines. (9) Between January and November 2021, UNICEF and partners reached 66,349 children with psychosocial support activities in child-friendly spaces, schools, and communities. (59) In Unity State, UNICEF supported the reopening of 24 schools in Panyijiar, Leer, Guit, Mayendit, and Rubkhona that had been closed due to flooding. UNICEF also distributed essential learning materials to 6,234 children, including provision of 7 emergency tents to allow children to resume learning. (59)
Dallaire Initiative (2018–2021)	Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative-funded project (\$2.2 million). Aims to train 1,200 South Sudanese soldiers, police, and prison personnel on addressing the use of children in armed conflict through behavior change. (12) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Dallaire Initiative during the reporting period.
Alternative Education System	Aims to improve literacy and provide out-of-school populations an alternative to formal education. (52) Includes the Accelerated Learning Program, which implements the MoGEL program primarily targeting children ages 13 to 17 who have reenrolled in lower primary classes. Also includes Community Girls' Schools, located in closer proximity to rural communities, and the Pastoralist Education Program, which targets children and adults in pastoral areas. (52) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Alternative Education System during the reporting period.
Measurement, Awareness Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAP 16) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor (2016-2022)	Funded by USDOL and implemented by ILO, aims to address knowledge gaps on child labor through research and data collection, the development of new survey methodologies, and capacity building programs. MAP 16 also supports partnerships to accelerate progress in addressing child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking. (60) The project likewise supports regional and sub-regional initiatives to eradicate child labor and forced labor in Africa. (60,61) Completed work on a three-country study of forced child labor in conflict zones, including South Sudan, which was published in 2021. (61) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.

Although South Sudan has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in commercial sexual exploitation and child soldiering. In addition, the reintegration and rehabilitation services provided to child soldiers are insufficient to meet existing needs. (1,25,55,62)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

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

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2021
	Raise the compulsory education age to the minimum age for work.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that the Ministry of Labor drafts and issues regulations to implement key elements related to child labor, including the number of hours and conditions for light work.	2020 – 2021
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is sufficiently funded to be able to investigate labor complaints, including allegations of child labor, and to resume labor inspections, including inspections targeting sectors where child labor is known to occur.	2021
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to adequately enforce labor laws throughout the country, including in the informal sector, and collect and publish labor force statistics, which are necessary to calculate ILO labor inspector recommendations.	2016 – 2021
	Publish data related to labor law enforcement, including the amount of funding provided for the labor inspectorate, whether refresher courses were provided to labor inspectors, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected, and whether routine or targeted inspections were conducted.	2012 – 2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	End state recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, including forced recruitment of children by state and non-state armed groups.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that initial training and refresher courses are provided to criminal investigators and that penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor are imposed.	2015 – 2021
	Investigate, prosecute, and impose penalties on perpetrators, including government officials, who recruit or use children in armed conflict.	2013 – 2021
	Establish a mechanism to assess penalties.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that labor regulations specify monetary penalties for all labor infractions, and that specified penalties are high enough to serve as a deterrent.	2019 – 2021
	Establish referral mechanisms for victims of the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure that prosecutors and law enforcement officials are familiar with the prohibitions on the worst forms of child labor, are trained in implementing all laws related to child labor, and do not treat victims of commercial sexual exploitation as offenders.	2012 – 2021
	Ensure that the Child Act's minimum age of 18 years for voluntary military recruitment is enforced by ending all recruitment and use of children under age 18 by the South Sudan People's Defense Force, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Army – In Opposition, or associated militias.	2012 – 2021
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to address all worst forms of child labor, and ensure that mandates are clearly defined.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that the Technical Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking and the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission are funded.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission receives its allocated funds by passing the budget on time.	2021
	Ensure that the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism is active during the reporting period.	2021
Government Policies	Ensure that the General Education Strategic Plan is adequately funded.	2012 – 2021
	Ensure that signatories of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan do not continue to recruit or re-recruit children as per the Resolution.	2021
Social Programs	Conduct a national child labor survey, including research to determine the activities carried out by children, to inform policies and social programs.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that children complete their primary education by resuming payment of teachers' salaries and subsidizing other school-related costs, and by withdrawing government forces from occupied schools.	2014 – 2021
	Improve access to education by addressing the lack of school infrastructure, including for pastoralist children.	2012 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Dallaire Initiative and the Alternative Education System.	2021
	Increase the scope of social programs to reach more children at risk of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and child soldiering.	2012 – 2021
	Continue to cooperate with child protection agencies, pursuant to Article 2.1.10 of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, to disarm, immediately release children in armed groups, and transfer them to appropriate social services providers. Ensure that the rehabilitation services provided to child soldiers are sufficient.	2014 – 2021

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