

In 2021, Morocco made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Kingdom of Morocco claims the territory of Western Sahara and administers the area that it controls with the same constitution, laws, and structures as in internationally recognized Morocco, including laws that deal with child labor. During the reporting period, the government increased the number of labor inspectors by over 43 percent and launched a new labor inspectorate information technology management system that enabled remote training sessions for inspectors in compliance with COVID-19 pandemic countermeasures. In addition, the government signed eight partnership agreements with local non-governmental organizations in various regions of Morocco to counter the prevalence of child labor. However, children in Western Sahara are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. The law on minimum age for work does not meet international standards. Furthermore, the scope of government social programs that target child labor is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.




I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Western Sahara are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work and in commercial sexual exploitation. Commercial sexual exploitation of migrant girls occurs and is reportedly more prevalent in fishing villages and on fishing boats. (1,2) Children, particularly in rural areas, are vulnerable to child labor due to educational barriers similar to those faced in other locations in Morocco, such as insufficient facilities, lack of reliable and safe transportation, and unqualified teachers. (1-3) Data on key indicators on children's work and education are not available from the sources used in this report.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Western Sahara is subject to the same laws as internationally recognized Morocco. (2) A U.S. Presidential Proclamation released in December 2020 recognized Moroccan sovereignty over the entire Western Sahara territory. (3) Morocco has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor, which the Government extends to the areas in Western Sahara that it controls (Table 1).

Table 1. 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 of Morocco has established laws and regulations related to child labor that extend to Western Sahara (Table 2). However, gaps exist in Morocco's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of forced labor.

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Articles 4 and 143 of the Labor Code (4)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 147 and 181 of the Labor Code (4)

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Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Child Labor List, Decree No. 2-10-183; Article 181 of the Labor Code (4,5)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 10 and 12 of the Labor Code; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code (4,6)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 448.1, 448.4, and 448.5 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (7)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 497, 498, 499, and 503-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (6,7)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Law number 1-73-282; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (6-8)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 4 of Royal Decree of 9 June 1966 (9)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 4 of Law No. 44-18 (10)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (7)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 1 of Law No. 04-00 (11)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 1 of Law No. 04-00 (11)

The labor law does not apply to children who work in the traditional artisan or handicraft sectors for family businesses with fewer than five employees. (3,4)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The Government of Morocco has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills (MEIPEEC)	Enforces child labor laws within its 54 inspection offices throughout the country. The Government of Morocco maintains 54 "designated focal points," which serve to coordinate efforts among labor inspectors as they work to deal with the prevalence of child labor. (3)
Ministry of the Interior	Enforces prohibitions on trafficking in persons, prostitution, and other exploitative crimes involving minors, as established in the Penal Code, through the General Directorate of National Security. (2,12,13)
General Prosecutor	Prosecutes criminal offenses against children and processes cases involving women and children in the court system. (1,2,12,13) The General Prosecutor is a judiciary body that serves independently from the Ministry of Justice. (12)

In 2021, the Government of Morocco increased the number of labor inspectors by over 43 percent, from 282 to 404 inspectors. (3) In addition, the government launched a new labor inspectorate information technology management system that enabled remote training sessions for inspectors in compliance with pandemic countermeasures. (3) During the reporting period, 998 children were removed from worksites considered dangerous by inspectors. (3)

The General Directorate of National Security carried out a 30-hour training session at the national police headquarters on protecting children's rights, including psychological aid to children, investigations and forensics related to child victims, and laws that protect children from violence. (3) In addition, the Ministry of Justice provided a training session for law enforcement officials and prosecutors pertaining to the implementation of Domestic Labor Law 19.12. (3) The Public Prosecutor's Office also organized trainings to help prosecutors recognize the indicators of human trafficking in child victims. The Ministry of the Interior held online trainings on human trafficking and smuggling of migrants. (14)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The Government of Morocco has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Technical Committee Under the Special Ministerial Commission for Children for the Protection and Improvement of Childhood	Ensures intersectoral coordination and monitoring for implementing international conventions on children's issues through a committee of 25 government bodies, chaired by the Head of the Government of Morocco. Establishes strategies and mechanisms to implement national policies and plans for child protection and coordinates the management of efforts at the local and regional levels. (12) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active during the reporting period.
Commission for the Support of Women Victims of Violence	Monitors policies and actions against child labor, ensuring coordination on child labor issues between labor inspectors and those NGOs that have partnership projects with the Government of Morocco. Made up of 19 ministerial departments and is chaired by the Head of Government of Morocco. (3) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active during the reporting period.
The Interministerial Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates the government's approach to trafficking in persons on an interministerial level. Conducts training sessions for members of the security services. (15) Chaired by the Head of the Government of Morocco and lead by the Ministry of Justice, with representation from civil society. (3, 12) Established in May 2019. (12, 15, 16) In 2021, the Commission carried out four training sessions in coordination with the Council of Europe, covering themes of human trafficking and management of crime scenes. (14)

Due to the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of coordination activities were canceled in 2021. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Ministry of Solidarity, Social Inclusion, and Family (MSWFSD) Integrated Public Policy on the Protection of Children in Morocco	Promotes an interdisciplinary approach to respond to the exploitation of children. (17) MEIPEEC continued administering grant programs to NGOs in 2021 to address child labor. In this context, MEIPEEC signed eight partnership agreements with NGOs in multiple regions of Morocco to counter the prevalence of child labor. These agreements support the removal of children from work (particularly domestic work), while also seeking to improve working conditions and raise awareness of the hazards associated with child labor. (3)

In March 2021, Labor Minister Mohamed Amekraz appeared on a virtual conference marking 2021 as the ILO-sponsored International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor. Minister Amekraz addressed attendees with an elaboration on the government's 10-year plan to eliminate child labor. (18) Morocco is a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7, which calls for the eradication of child labor by 2025; and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. (12)

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 6). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

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Table 6. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Tayssir Conditional Cash Transfer Program†	The Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family funds the Tayssir Conditional Cash Transfer Program, providing direct cash transfers to qualifying families whose children meet school attendance criteria. In 2021, the Government of Morocco reported its continued support for this social program but did not provide further information. (3)

† Program is funded by the Government of Morocco.

‡ The Government of Morocco had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (12,19)

Although the government has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including for children engaged in forced domestic work. (1,20)

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 Western Sahara (Table 7).

Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children age 15 and under are protected by law, including children who work in artisan and handicraft sectors for family businesses.	2009 – 2021
Coordination	Ensure that key coordinating bodies related to the worst forms of child labor are active.	2021
Social Programs	Remove barriers to education, such as insufficient facilities, lack of reliable and safe transportation, and unqualified teachers, particularly in rural areas.	2015 – 2021
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, including child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.	2017 – 2021
	Conduct a comprehensive study of children's work activities to inform policies and practices to determine whether children are engaged in or at risk of becoming involved in child labor and determine the number of child laborers and their education levels.	2013 – 2021

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