



DJIBOUTI

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Djibouti made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor was made aware of two child labor cases involving teenage Ethiopian workers employed in construction. The labor inspectors immediately informed the site manager and removed the underaged workers from the job. However, Djibouti’s minimum age for work protections do not meet international standards because they apply only to children who perform work under a formal employment agreement. In addition, Djibouti’s laws do not meet international standards for the prohibition of commercialized sexual exploitation because there are no laws that specifically criminalize the use of a child for prostitution.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	12.3% (23,693)
Attending School	5 to 14	67.4%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	10.2%

Children in Djibouti are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in street work.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Construction.



Services

Domestic work.† Street work including vending, shining shoes, washing cars, and begging. Working in restaurants, small shops, and businesses.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Forced domestic work and forced begging.

† 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.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Djibouti’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Ensure that all children are afforded minimum age for work protections under the law, including children working outside formal employment relationships.

Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include sectors in which child labor is known to occur and that expose children to abuse, injury, unhealthy environments, and particularly difficult conditions, including street work.

Criminally prohibit the use of children in prostitution.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Enforcement

Publish complete labor law enforcement information, including funding of the labor inspectorate, the number of labor inspections conducted in total and at worksites, whether routine inspections are targeted, if unannounced inspections are conducted, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.

Establish a formal mechanism for the Ministry of Labor to receive child labor complaints and a reciprocal referral mechanism between the labor inspectorate and social services to protect and rehabilitate children involved in child labor.

Ensure that the labor inspectorate has the necessary equipment, including adequate transportation, to conduct labor inspections in all regions.

Impose monetary penalties for child labor violations that are consistent with the law and commensurate with the seriousness of the violation.

Publish complete criminal law enforcement data, including training for criminal investigators, number of investigations, number of violations, number of prosecutions, number of convictions, and number of penalties imposed.

Institutionalize child labor-focused trainings for all labor inspectors, including by training new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment, as well as providing refresher courses throughout their employment.

Coordination

Ensure that the National Council for Children is active and able to carry out its intended mandate of assessing progress on issues pertaining to children and proposing child-related policy and strategic guidelines.

Establish a coordinating body dedicated to preventing and eliminating all forms of child labor.

Government Policies

Implement key policies related to child labor, including the National Strategic Plan for Childhood, the National Strategy for Migration, and the Action Plan for Education and Training and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis.

Adopt a comprehensive national policy to address all forms of child labor, including its worst forms.

Social Programs

Conduct a comprehensive study of children’s activities to determine whether they are engaged in or at risk for involvement in child labor.

Ensure that all children, including refugees, asylum seekers, and children in rural areas have access to education by removing barriers to obtaining national birth certificates or United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees documentation to attend school.

Implement programs to specifically assist children involved in domestic work, street work, and commercial sexual exploitation.

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor and make information about implementation measures publicly available, including the Ministry of Women and Families Programs, International Organization for Migration Center for Unaccompanied Children and Vulnerable Migrants, and Expanding Opportunities for Learning.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Continued conflict between Russia and Ukraine—which account for the majority of Djibouti’s wheat imports—and continued drought in the region have led to rural workers losing livelihoods and rising commodity prices throughout the country. Reports indicate that this has subjected children to higher risks of labor exploitation, including child labor, and has increased the risk of school dropout for 26,500 children, particularly girls. Djibouti is vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate, and children will become increasingly vulnerable to exploitation as the country experiences more climate change-related weather events and trends such as droughts, floods, and sea level rise. Lastly, migrant children, including undocumented migrant girls, are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation in Djibouti City, along the Ethiopia-Djibouti trucking corridor.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Requirements for documentation and birth registration can be barriers to accessing education because in practice, migrant children and refugees without UN High Commissioner for Refugees documentation cannot attend public schools, and children in rural areas and street children without birth registration documents can attend school but cannot take exams.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Djibouti has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Djibouti's laws do not meet international standards on the minimum age for work because the Labor Code's minimum age provision applies only to children who perform work under a formal employment agreement. In addition, Djibouti's laws do not meet international standards on the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children because laws do not specifically criminalize the use of a child for prostitution.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 16 Years		Article 5 of the Labor Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Articles 108 and 110 of the Labor Code
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Article 110 of the Labor Code
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Article 23 of the Law Regarding Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 1 and 5–7 of the Law on the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons and the Illegal Smuggling of Migrants; Article 23 of the Law Regarding Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 394, 396, 462, and 463 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 5–8 of the Law on the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons and the Illegal Smuggling of Migrants
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Articles 355, 356, and 461 of the Penal Code
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years		Article 1 of the National Army Amendment Decree
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Articles 149–151 and 461 of the Penal Code
Compulsory Education Age, 16 Years		Articles 4 and 14 of the Law on the Orientation of the Education System
Free Public Education		Article 16 of the Law on the Orientation of the Education System

* Country has no conscription

The Labor Code’s minimum age provision applies only to children who perform work under a formal employment agreement, which does not conform to international standards requiring the protection of all children under the minimum age for work. In addition, while Djibouti’s Labor Code contains a hazardous work list, it only applies to domestic work, work in hotels, and work in bars, omitting hazardous activities like street work, in which children are known to be engaged in the country. Article 111 in the Labor Code grants authority to the Minister of Labor to publish a hazardous work list enumerating additional hazardous sectors, which has not yet been done. Furthermore, laws do not specifically criminalize the use of a child for prostitution.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, research did not find information on whether criminal or labor law enforcement agencies in Djibouti took actions to address child labor.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor: Enforces all labor laws, including child labor laws and regulations. Through its General Inspectorate of Labor and Social Laws, regulates youth employment. During the reporting period, there were two child labor cases involving teenage Ethiopian workers employed in construction. The labor inspectors immediately informed the site manager and removed the underaged workers from the job.

Criminal Enforcement Agencies: Through the Djibouti National Police, enforce criminal laws and investigate crimes related to child labor, including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. In addition, the Ministry of Justice has two prosecutors specifically trained to handle cases involving trafficking of vulnerable children.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	No
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Unknown	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

It is **unknown** how many labor inspectors conducted worksite inspections, or whether child labor violations were found. It is also **unknown** whether investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions were initiated, or perpetrators were convicted.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Djibouti established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, it is unknown whether this mechanism took actions to coordinate efforts to address child labor during the reporting period.

National Council for Children: Assesses progress on issues pertaining to children and proposes policy and strategic guidelines. Headed by the Prime Minister and includes public stakeholders, civil society partners, associations, and NGOs involved in the field of childhood. Research was unable to determine whether the National Council for Children met or carried out activities during the reporting period.

<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Djibouti established policies related to child labor. However, these policies do not cover all the worst forms of child labor, including the use of children in commercial sexual exploitation.</p> <p>‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.</p>	<p>Child Protection Policies: Includes the National Child Policy (2022–2032), which sets out fundamental rights for children—including the right to education and the right to health—and mobilizes national resources toward these ends. The National Strategic Plan for Childhood in Djibouti provides political and strategic guidelines for implementing the National Child Policy. Both policies are coordinated by the Ministry of Women and the Family. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period.</p> <p>National Strategy for Migration: Promotes aid and livelihoods for migrants in Djibouti and raises awareness for the rights and humanitarian needs of migrants. Facilitates coordination between humanitarian partners and the government through the National Coordination Office for Migration. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period.</p> <p>Action Plan for Education and Training (2021–2025): In coordination with the Master Plan for Education and Training (2021–2035), aims to expand inclusive and equitable education to all children in Djibouti, increase access to vocational training, achieve universal basic education, and develop the preschool education system. The plans bring together various ministries to ensure cohesive implementation, planning, and monitoring of their programs. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Djibouti funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the full scope of the problem.</p> <p>† Program is funded by the Government of Djibouti. ‡ The government had other programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</p>	<p>Ministry of Women and Families Programs:† Includes programs that provide children and families from vulnerable groups with resources to reduce their economic and social vulnerabilities, such as: the Social Assistance Program, which provides children and their families with education and in-kind support; the Support Project for Girls and Women in Precarious Situations, a multi-sectoral program which provides girls with education and training; the Country Strategic Option Program (2019–2024), a rural poverty-reduction program; and Djibouti’s Support Program for Children with Academic Difficulties, a program that provides academic support to children from low-income families. Research was unable to determine what activities were undertaken during the reporting period.</p> <p>International Organization for Migration Center for Unaccompanied Children and Vulnerable Migrants: Provides mental health services, medical support, legal assistance, and basic needs to young and child migrants, who are often vulnerable to exploitation. Established in conjunction with the National Referencing Mechanism for Trafficking Victims, which allows civil society organizations and NGOs to refer people impacted by human trafficking directly to law enforcement agencies. Research was unable to determine what activities were undertaken during the reporting period.</p> <p>Expanding Opportunities for Learning (2019–2024): A \$30 million project co-financed by the Government of Djibouti and the International Development Association. Supports Djibouti’s efforts to expand access to quality education for 35,000 at-risk or underserved children, including girls, refugees, and disabled students. The project also plans to build the capacity of teachers and administrators in underserved areas. Research was unable to determine what activities were undertaken during the reporting period.</p>

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects

 **WORKER RIGHTS SPOTLIGHT**

The Government of Djibouti has interfered in union activities and has prevented union leaders from leaving the country to attend international union conferences. These factors can hinder workers’ ability to report child labor, particularly in street work and the informal economy.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports