



# GHANA

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Ghana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government increased the number of labor inspections by approximately 12 percent, from 1,108 in 2022 to 1,290 in 2023. It also launched the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor, building on the previous national action plans to address child labor. In addition, it conducted multiple trainings on child protection and human trafficking issues that reached over 1,500 participants in local communities. However, Ghana does not criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, resource constraints, including funding to agencies, severely limited the government’s ability to adequately enforce labor laws and implement social programs.

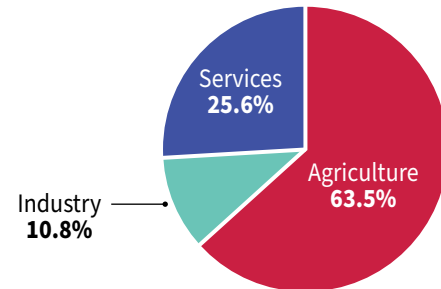


## PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

### Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	4.1% (335,541)
Boys		4.3%
Girls		4.0%
Urban		2.5%
Rural		5.9%
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	15.6% (345,662)
Boys		15.9%
Girls		15.2%
Urban		11.8%
Rural		19.9%
Attending School	5 to 14	92.0%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	3.7%

### Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Children in Ghana are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in cocoa, fishing, and gold.

### Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



#### Agriculture

Producing cocoa, including land clearing, using machetes and cutlasses for weeding, breaking cocoa pods, collecting cocoa pods with a harvesting hook, exposure to pesticides;† producing rice; fishing, including for tilapia; preparing bait, nets, and fishing gear; launching, paddling, and draining canoes; diving for fish; casting and pulling fishing nets and untangling them underwater; sorting, picking, cleaning, smoking, transporting, and selling fish; cleaning and repairing nets; building and repairing boats; herding livestock, including bovines; and hunting.



#### Industry

Quarrying† and small-scale mining,† sometimes for gold, including digging in deep pits, the use of mercury,† and operating machinery;† textiles; manufacturing;† construction and carrying heavy loads; and work in slaughterhouses.



#### Services

Domestic work; transporting heavy loads as *kayaye*;† work in transportation;† street work,† including begging.



#### Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking; forced labor in begging; forced labor in agriculture, including cocoa; forced herding, fishing, artisanal gold mining, domestic work, and street work, including vending and carrying heavy loads; forced ritual servitude for girls known as *trokosi*, including in domestic work for priests.

† 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 Ghana's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

### Legal Framework

Accede to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of children in all illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.

Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

Update the hazardous work list for children to cover all hazardous types of work outlined in ILO C. 182.

### Enforcement

Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors from 179 to 969 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of 15.5 million people.

Strengthen and fully fund the mechanism to track cases of child labor for referral between law enforcement and social services providers.

Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators have adequate resources, including office space, transportation, and supplies, to adequately carry out their mandates.

Ensure that prosecutors who have received sufficient legal training oversee and lead the prosecution of cases involving the worst forms of child labor, that an adequate number of state attorneys are available to prosecute cases, and that these cases are prosecuted according to the law.

Improve communication and coordination among criminal enforcement agencies to prosecute cases of the worst forms of child labor and provide adequate victim support.

Ensure that the Trafficking in Persons Information System is used and publish any related activities.

### Government Policies

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement government policies related to child labor and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis, including the Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework.

Provide necessary resources for the government to implement the mandates of the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana.

### Social Programs

Improve access to education by eliminating school-related fees, increasing the number of classrooms, improving access to schools, providing sanitation facilities, and prohibiting sexual harassment and physical violence in schools.

Ensure that opportunities such as vocational training are available to secondary school students enrolled in the dual-track system.

Expand the availability of government-supported shelter services for child survivors and ensure that all shelters are operational.

Replicate and expand the Child Labor Monitoring System, and establish additional programs to address child labor in the cocoa, fishing, and mining sectors.



## CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Many children who are subjected to human trafficking in Ghana are exploited for agricultural labor in cocoa production, domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, gold mining, and fishing. Children living around Lake Volta are at higher risk of forced labor in fishing. In addition, girls from rural northern regions in Ghana travel to urban centers to work as *kayayei*, or female porters, carrying heavy loads on their heads in markets, and are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation.



## BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

According to the Constitution and the Education Act, primary education in Ghana is free from kindergarten through grade 12, though only compulsory through grade 9, and a birth certificate is not needed for enrollment. The dual-track system, introduced in 2018, allows secondary school students to attend school in alternating semesters and take advantage of opportunities such as vocational training when they are not in school. Although this has significantly increased the overall number of children attending school, reports suggest that opportunities to attend vocational training are often not readily available or affordable. As a result, these children are vulnerable to child labor during the times when they are not in school. In addition, factors such as a shortage of classrooms, administrative fees, expenses for school supplies and uniforms, long distances to schools, the absence of sanitation facilities, and poor educational infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, severely limit access to education for many children.



## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Ghana has not ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, <b>15 Years</b>		Sections 89 and 92 of the Children’s Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, <b>18 Years</b>		Sections 91 and 92 of the Children’s Act
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Articles 28.1d, 28.2, and 28.5 of the Constitution; Article 7 of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument; Sections 91 and 92 of the Children’s Act; Article 58 of the Labor Act
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles 16.1 and 16.2 of the Constitution; Articles 116 and 117 of the Labor Act; Sections 1–3 and 42 of the Human Trafficking Act; Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Prohibition Legislative Instrument
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Act; Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Prohibition Legislative Instrument; Articles 21–25 of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Sections 101A, 107, 108, 110, 111, 274–277, and 279–283 of the Criminal Offenses Act; Article 7(2) of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument; Section 136 of the Electronic Transaction Act; Sections 62–66 of the Cybersecurity Act; Sections 1–3 and Section 42 of the Human Trafficking Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, <b>18 Years</b>		Ghana Armed Forces General Eligibility (Recruits)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		Ghana Armed Forces General Eligibility (Recruits)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		

**Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)**

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Compulsory Education Age, <b>15 Years</b> ‡		Article 2.2 of the Education Act
Free Public Education		Article 25.1.a of the Constitution; Articles 1.1, 1.2, and 2.2 of the Education Act

\* Country has no conscription

‡ Age calculated based on available information



**ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR**

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Ghana took actions to address child labor. However, a lack of funding and inspectors may have hindered enforcement efforts.

**Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

**Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations (MELR):** Enforces labor laws, including those related to child labor. Conducts national dialogue and a workshop on Child Labor-Free Zones to discuss child labor in the cocoa industry.

**Ministry of the Interior:** Through its Ghana Police Service, investigates and prosecutes cases related to the worst forms of child labor, and operates a 24/7 hotline for reporting crimes. Within the Ghana Police Service, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit and Anti-Human Trafficking Unit investigate cases and provide support to survivors. Through its Ghana Immigration Service, combats human trafficking through Anti-Human Smuggling and Trafficking Units.

**Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts**

Has a Labor Inspectorate	<b>Yes</b>	Has a Complaint Mechanism	<b>Yes</b>
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	<b>Yes</b>	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	<b>Yes</b>
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	<b>Yes</b>	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	<b>Yes</b>
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	<b>Yes</b>	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	<b>Yes</b>

In 2023, **179** labor inspectors conducted **1,290** worksite inspections, finding **54** child labor violations. The government also conducted investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, initiated **9** prosecutions, and convicted **7** perpetrators.



**COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

**Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Ghana established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.

**National Steering Committee on Child Labor:** Coordinates government efforts to address the worst forms of child labor, and oversees implementation of the National Plan of Action Phase II on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which includes implementation of the Ghana Child Labor Monitoring System. Led by MELR’s Child Labor Unit and includes representatives from other ministries, employers’ and workers’ organizations, and civil society. In 2023, the government administered multiple trainings on child protection and human trafficking issues that reached over 1,500 participants in local communities.

**Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)**

<p><b>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</b></p> <p>Ghana established policies related to child labor. However, research was unable to determine if these policies were active during the reporting period.</p> <p><i>† Policy was approved during the reporting period.</i>  <i>‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.</i></p>	<p><b>Hazardous Child Labor Activity Frameworks:</b> Includes the Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework and the Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework for the Cocoa Sector. Developed in consultation with workers’ and employers’ organizations to identify hazardous activities that should be prohibited for children. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement these policies during the reporting period.</p> <p><b>National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana:</b> Aims to address human trafficking by proactively preventing cases, protecting survivors, and prosecuting offenders while partnering with stakeholders. The government relied heavily on NGOs to implement this policy, and in 2023, awareness-raising trainings on migration and human trafficking in local communities were carried out.</p> <p><b>Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor:</b>† Aims to reduce the number of children engaged in labor by 10 percent and direct national efforts towards achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals related to forced and child labor.</p>
<p><b>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</b></p> <p>Ghana funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors and in all states where child labor has been identified, including in the cocoa sector.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Ghana.</i>  <i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p><b>Projects in the Cocoa Sector:</b> Aim to increase sustainability in the cocoa sector, improve farmer livelihoods, increase access to education opportunities for children, and address the worst forms of child labor in cocoa-growing areas. While private industry continued to implement the Cocoa and Forests Initiative during the reporting period, the scope of existing programs, including in cocoa, is insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem in Ghana. The industry-funded NORC report released in October 2020 found that programs like the child labor monitoring and remediation system, access to quality education, and programs to increase farmer yields and household income need to be scaled and expanded to impact more families.</p> <p><b>Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MOGCSP) Programs:</b>† Programs that aim to support vulnerable children. Include: the Program to Assist <i>Kayayei</i>, which provides rehabilitation and reintegration support; the temporary program “Get Off the Street,” which aims to remove children from the street and reintegrate them into family and educational settings; the Human Trafficking Fund, which aims to provide financial support to victims; and the conditional cash transfer program, which aims to provide monetary support to poor households with orphans and vulnerable children on the condition that these children attend school. During the reporting period, MOGCSP continued its advocacy efforts through television and radio campaigns on topics related to child labor and human trafficking.</p> <p><b>Educational Programs:</b>† Ministry of Education-funded programs under the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education that aim to increase school attendance and enrollment. MOGCSP’s Ghana School Feeding Program aims to reduce malnutrition and improve attendance among students, its Capitation Grant Scheme helps defray the cost of basic education for students in public primary schools, and its Ghana Education Service—Girls’ Education Unit places girls’ education officers at the regional and district levels and mobilizes communities to enroll more girls in school. In 2023, the Ghana School Feeding Program fed 3,448,065 pupils in 10,832 public schools.</p>

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit [dol.gov/ILABprojects](https://dol.gov/ILABprojects)  
 For references, please visit [dol.gov/ChildLaborReports](https://dol.gov/ChildLaborReports)