

HONDURAS

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Honduras made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government conducted the country's first national child labor survey and created an implementation manual that identifies sectors such as forestry, logging, hunting, fishing, mining, quarrying, and manufacturing as hazardous. It also established 91 local community committees for the prevention of child labor. However, labor law enforcement agencies lack the financial and human resources necessary to fulfill their mandates, identifying no child labor violations in 2023. Social programs to address child labor in agriculture are also insufficient, and additional social programs are needed to address child labor in mining, domestic work, and illicit gang activity.

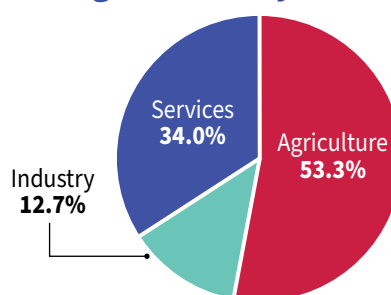


PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent of Population |
|----------------------------|----------|-----------------------|
| Working | 5 to 14 | 9.0% (168,348) |
| Hazardous Work by Children | 15 to 17 | Unavailable |
| Attending School | 5 to 14 | 87.9% |
| Combining Work and School | 7 to 14 | 6.2% |

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Children in Honduras are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. They are also used to carry out illicit activities, including selling and trafficking drugs. In addition, children engage in child labor in the production of coffee, melons, and lobsters.

Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Production of melons and coffee. Fishing,[†] including diving for lobster.[†]



Industry

Artisanal mining[†] and construction.[†]



Services

Washing car windows, begging, vending, and performing[†] on the streets for tips. Scavenging in garbage dumps.[†]

Domestic work.[†]



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]

Forced labor in fishing, mining, construction, and in the hospitality industry. Forced begging, street vending, and domestic work. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Use in illicit activities, including by gangs in committing extortion, transporting weapons, and selling and trafficking drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.

[†] 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 Honduras' implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Raise the compulsory education age from 17 to 18 to align with the minimum age for work.

Enforcement

Conduct sufficient labor inspections in areas in which child labor is prevalent, such as rural areas, the informal sector, and indigenous communities in which children engage in hazardous activities.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Provide information related to the number of labor inspectors, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected, and the labor inspectorate's funding.

Ensure that labor and criminal law enforcement agencies have sufficient funding to carry out their mandates nationwide.

While the number of labor inspectors is unknown, employ at least 290 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 4.3 million people.

Investigate and prosecute perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor.

Ensure enforcement authorities utilize the established referral mechanism to provide the families of children removed from child labor, particularly the worst forms, with social protection services such as conditional cash transfers for families in poverty, health and nutrition programs, and education programs.

Ensure that the number of inspections conducted by labor inspectors is commensurate to the size of the labor inspectorate to ensure the adequate quality and scope of inspections.

Government Policies

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Road Map for the Elimination of Child Labor in Honduras (2021–2025) and publish results from activities implemented on an annual basis.

Social Programs

Expand access to education by increasing funding and infrastructure for schools, enhancing efforts to protect students from gang violence, and ensuring that all students are able to attend school with sufficient support, including children with disabilities and those in rural areas.

Ensure that social programs reach the children who are most vulnerable to child labor, including children of African descent and indigenous children.

Expand social programs that address child labor in agriculture and create programs to assist children engaged in child labor in fishing, mining, domestic work, and illicit gang activity.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Reports indicate that children from indigenous and Afro-descendant groups, returned migrant children, and children in the LGBTQIA+ community are vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. In particular, boys from the Miskito Afro-descendant community are vulnerable to forced labor in the agriculture, construction, fishing, mining, and hospitality sectors. The Inter-Institutional Commission against Sexual, Commercial, and Trafficking Exploitation and the Public Ministry reported cases of commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes perpetrated by family members or friends. Criminal organizations exploit girls in sex trafficking, force children into street begging, and coerce and threaten children to transport weapons, sell drugs, commit extortion, or serve as lookouts.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

There are numerous barriers to education access in Honduras, including poor school infrastructure; gang violence; lack of transportation; and the cost of school fees, uniforms, and supplies. Reports indicate that 40.3 percent of children aged 5 to 17 (1,156,578 children) are outside the educational system, a number much higher than the official statistics show. Reports also indicate that in some regions of the country, especially in La Mosquitia, language barriers exist as the teachers often do not speak local languages or dialects. Violence originating from gang activity, including recruitment into gangs and territorial disputes, also presents barriers to access for both children and educators, causing some schools to drastically reduce their enrollment. Additionally, children from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities face barriers to education access as a result of discrimination, causing a high dropout rate among this population. Finally, children with disabilities attend schools at a lower rate than the general population, and the National Center for Social Sector Information stated that 43 percent of persons with disabilities received no formal education.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Honduras has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. In addition, Honduras’ laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards.

| Child Labor Laws and Regulations | Meets International Standards | Legislation |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Minimum Age for Work, 18 Years | ✓ | Article 120 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 15 of the Executive Agreement STSS-211-01; Article 32 of the Labor Code |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years | ✓ | Articles 1 and 122 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016 |
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | ✓ | Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016; Article 8 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 |
| Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor | ✓ | Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 6 and 52 of the Law on the Prevention of Human Trafficking (No. 59-2012); Articles 221 and 222 of the Penal Code |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | ✓ | Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013; Articles 219 and 220 of the Penal Code |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | ✓ | Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 219, 220, 257, and 259–262 of the Penal Code |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | ✓ | Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013 |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years | ✓ | Articles 2 and 12 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 |
| Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military | N/A* | |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups | ✓ | Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 |
| Compulsory Education Age, 17 Years | ✓ | Articles 8, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Articles 36 and 39 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence |
| Free Public Education | ✓ | Articles 7, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Article 36 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 171 of the Constitution |

*Country has no conscription

In 2023, the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor implementation manual interpreted Honduras’ hazardous work list to include sectors such as forestry, logging, hunting, fishing, mining, quarrying, and manufacturing. Despite this effort, children in Honduras are required to attend school only up to age 17 even though the minimum age for work is 18. This standard makes children aged 17 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Honduras took action to address child labor. However, insufficient human and financial resources for the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (SETRASS) and criminal enforcement agencies hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor and Social Security (SETRASS): Conducts labor inspections and enforces child labor laws through the General Directorate of Social Welfare and the General Directorate of Labor Inspections. In 2023, the Secretary of Labor and Social Security, along with the National Institute of Statistics and World Vision, conducted the first National Child Labor Survey of Honduras (ENTIH), covering all 18 departments and involving 22,762 households and approximately 100 trained enumerators. Going forward, the ENTIH is expected to take place every 4 years.

Public Ministry: Carries out criminal investigations and prosecutions, including for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor. Through its Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children, prosecutes crimes involving child victims. Also coordinates with the National Police to investigate crimes related to the worst forms of child labor through its Police Investigation Directorate (DPI). In 2023, DPI, in coordination with the Public Ministry, carried out several investigations, including “Operation Breaking the Chain,” which resulted in the arrest of 9 individuals linked to human trafficking and the rescue of 40 Honduran women, including 7 girls. The Public Ministry, through its Technical Agency for Criminal Investigations, investigates and provides technical support for criminal prosecutions, including by the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children, such as those related to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and child pornography. Through its Unit Against Trafficking in Persons, Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Illicit Human Smuggling (UTESCTP), coordinates with domestic and international enforcement agencies to carry out anti-trafficking in persons operations and prosecutions.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

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

In 2023, an **unknown** number of labor inspectors conducted **3,007** worksite inspections, finding **0** child labor violations. The Government conducted **207** investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, initiating **0** prosecutions and convicting **0** perpetrators.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

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

National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor (CONETI): Coordinates government policies and efforts on child labor issues. Chaired by SETRASS and includes officials from eight government ministries; the Secretariat for Children, Adolescence, and Family (SENAF); the Supreme Court; and other government entities. Oversees regional sub-commissions, led by officials from SETRASS and SENAF, which implement efforts at the local level. In 2023, the government approved the Strategic Plan of the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor, which focuses on promoting children’s rights, ensuring access to education, and strengthening institutions and entities responsible for protecting children. Additionally, CONETI created a new legal entity within the commission to assist institutions in reaching consensus on initiatives related to abolishing child labor.

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Honduras established policies related to child labor. However, the tripartite commission under the U.S.–Honduras Labor Rights Monitoring Action Plan meant to advise, support, and ensure the sustainability of the Government of Honduras’ efforts to effectively enforce labor laws, including child labor, has been inactive since it made the request to extend the Monitoring Action Plan in September 2023.</p> <p><i>† Policy was approved during the reporting period.</i></p> | <p>National Plan for the Elimination of Child labor (2023–2026):[†] Developed with the support of the Alliance 8.7 and approved by CONETI in July 2023. Highlights the need to identify risk factors for vulnerability to child labor, establish a common protocol for responding to child labor situations, and conduct awareness raising on child labor laws and labor rights. In 2023, under the plan, the government conducted the first national child labor survey, submitted a hazardous work manual to the National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor, and established 91 local community committees for the prevention of child labor.</p> <p>U.S.–Honduras Labor Rights Monitoring and Action Plan (MAP): Aims to improve the enforcement of labor laws, including laws related to child labor, by implementing legal and policy reforms, strengthening SETRASS, and increasing outreach efforts. However, since September 2023, the Government of Honduras has ceased organizing tripartite meetings under this plan. With the tripartite commission being inactive, and the lag in backfilling inspectors since the 2022 mass firing, U.S. and Honduran observers have raised concerns regarding the Honduran government’s commitment to the MAP. In 2023, USDOL and the U.S. Department of State continued to finance programs to educate youth who are at risk of labor exploitation, provide technical assistance for an electronic case management system to improve enforcement of labor laws, and develop a system to detect and prevent child labor in the coffee sector.</p> |
| <p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>In 2023, Honduras funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs do not cover all worst forms of child labor in the country, including the use of children in fishing, mining, domestic work, and illicit activities.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Honduras.</i></p> <p><i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p> | <p>Solidarity Network (Red Solidaria):[†] Consists of a conditional cash transfer of \$163 annually to 350,000 families in some of the poorest towns in the country, provided that families vaccinate their children and keep them enrolled in school. The program also includes \$32.4 million in investments in health, education, preventing teenage pregnancy, infrastructure, and housing projects. In 2023, the program distributed over \$63 million to participants in 2,007 targeted villages, reached 52,176 people through literacy programs, and awarded 30,000 scholarships for continued education to youth who experience poverty or social vulnerability.</p> <p>Program to Combat Child Forced Begging:[†] SENAF program that identifies and rescues children who are subjected to forced begging and raises awareness of child forced begging through media. In 2023, this program carried out a campaign to assist children living and working on the streets by providing humanitarian aid to families and referring them to social services.</p> <p>Program for the Reintegration of Returned Unaccompanied Migrant Children:[†] The program protects and assists unaccompanied migrant children who have been returned to Honduras. It is implemented by SENAF in collaboration with the National Institute for Migration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), UNICEF, the Network of Institutions for Children’s Rights, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and NGO Aldeas SOS. UNICEF, through IOM, provides financial support for the program. The United States Agency for International Development, through activity with IOM, supports the Government of Honduras (GOH) to assist returned migrants to reintegrate into local communities, beginning with humane and dignified services at the reception centers in Omoa, La Lima, and Belen. The Belen Center is the only center that supports unaccompanied migrant children and families. It offers reintegration services and lodging with capacity for 110 people. SENAF manages the Belen Center and provides staffing for it and relies on funding support from the MFA and donors to cover operational costs due to lack of sufficient budget. In addition, the three centers provide the following services: immigration registration, psychological care, primary medical care, Restoring Family Links by phone and internet, and protection services.</p> |

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

 **WORKER RIGHTS SPOTLIGHT**

Workers in Honduras had difficulty exercising the rights to form and join unions and to engage in collective bargaining. As labor unions are integral to reporting on and advocacy for the identification and prevention of child labor, violations of child labor laws and other labor abuses in the agriculture sector may go undetected.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports