



LIBERIA

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Liberia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government conducted a study on street children and began mapping child labor incidents throughout the country in order to raise awareness. The Social Safety Net Program also provided an estimated 25,000 households (about 105,000 individuals) in four counties (Bomi, Grand Kru, Maryland, and River Gee) with cash transfers. However, the government has yet to accede to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict or the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. The government's social programs are also not sufficient to address the scope of the problem in the country, and labor and criminal law enforcement efforts are hindered by a lack of financial resources.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	30.4% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	80.1%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	28.6%

Children in Liberia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in construction, including carrying heavy loads.

Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Production of rubber, including cutting trees with machetes and using acid; farming activities.



Industry

Mining diamonds, including washing gravel and using mercury and cyanide, crushing stones; construction, including carrying heavy loads.†



Services

Domestic work; street work, including begging and selling goods.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs; forced labor in domestic work, street vending, mining, begging, and work on small rubber plantations; commercial sexual exploitation, 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 Liberia's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

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

Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.

Enforcement

Ensure that penalties for employing children under the minimum age for work are stringent enough to deter violations.

Publicly release labor and criminal law enforcement data, including the number of inspectors, inspections, investigations, prosecutions, and convictions done by the labor inspectorate during the reporting period.

Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for child labor violations.

Ensure that the labor inspectorate's complaint and referral mechanism is adequately supported and operational.

Ensure adequate funding for child labor enforcement agencies, such as the Ministry of Labor, the Liberia National Police, and the Women and Children Protection Section, and provide necessary training for such officials to enforce child labor laws.

Disaggregate the child endangerment cases prosecuted through the Ministry of Justice to determine the number of cases related to the worst forms of child labor.

Coordination

Ensure adequate funding for the National Commission on Child Labor's program activities to address child labor.

Ensure that coordinating bodies, including the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, are implementing effective case referral mechanisms.

Government Policies

Carry out activities under the National Action Plan for Trafficking in Persons and the Social Welfare Policy, and publish information about the implementation of these policies on an annual basis.

Social Programs

Collect and publish comprehensive research data to determine child labor activities and to inform policies and programs.

Improve access to education by subsidizing school-related costs, and reduce barriers to education by building additional schools, hiring more rural teachers, providing sufficient learning materials, addressing sexual abuse in both schools and orphanages, and providing adequate transportation.

Ensure that children do not leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, especially in forced domestic work, the production of rubber, commercial sexual exploitation, and the mining of diamonds.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Human traffickers are often family members or respected members of the community who promise poor rural relatives and neighbors better economic or educational opportunities for themselves (in the case of young women) or their children, but instead the young women and children are subjected to domestic servitude, forced begging, forced labor, street vending, and occasionally sex trafficking. In addition, there are reports that children residing at various orphanages within the capital of Monrovia and in other parts of the country are vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to a lack of basic necessities at the orphanages, including food.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Section 9 of the Children’s Law mandates free basic education from grades one to nine, but the cost of registration fees, uniforms, transportation, books, and school supplies limits access to education for some children. In addition, family members often require children to work long hours, denying them the ability to attend school, even if they could afford to do so. In schools throughout rural communities, few teachers are on the official Ministry of Education payroll, and communities supplement their school’s teaching force by recruiting and paying small stipends for volunteer teachers. For secondary school students (grades 10–12), reports indicate that there is a shortage of teachers, insufficient learning materials, a lack of educational facilities, and inadequate transportation, all of which limit access to education. In addition, some teachers sexually exploit students in exchange for the promise of good grades, resulting in children avoiding or dropping out of school. Research also indicates the ongoing practice of temporarily removing boys and girls from formal schooling to participate in initiation rituals that transition a child into adulthood; many of these children may not return to school after their participation in these initiation ceremonies, making them more vulnerable to child labor.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Liberia has not ratified key international conventions concerning child labor, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict or the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. However, Liberia’s laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 15 Years		Articles 2.3 and 21.2 of the Decent Work Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Article 7 and Section 9.1 of the Children’s Law
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Article 21.4 of the Decent Work Act; Hazardous and Light Work List of 2023
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Article 2.2 of the Decent Work Act; Article 7, Section 8 of the Children’s Law; Article 12 of the Constitution; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Article 7, Section 8 of the Children’s Law; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Article 3, Section 21 of the Children’s Law; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia

Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Chapter 16 of the Penal Code
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Article 3, Section 22 of the Children’s Law
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*	Article 3, Section 22 of the Children’s Law
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Article 3, Section 22 of the Children’s Law
Compulsory Education Age, 14 Years		Article 3, Section 9 of the Children’s Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act
Free Public Education		Article 3, Section 9 of the Children’s Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act

* Country has no conscription



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Liberia took actions to address child labor. However, funding issues may have hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor (MOL): Conducts worksite inspections and addresses child labor violations.

Ministry of Justice: Promotes and executes the rule of law for public safety, including the prosecution of child labor perpetrators.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	No	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

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Liberia established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, this mechanism is hindered by a lack of financial support.</p>	<p>National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL): Coordinates government and civil society activities concerning child labor. Led by MOL and comprising representatives from 16 organizations, including international and civil society organizations. Assists in coordinating child labor investigations. Seeks to reform national child labor laws and create a national child labor database, which would assist surveys on the extent of child labor issues in Liberia. During the reporting period, NACOMAL began mapping child labor incidents throughout the country in order to raise awareness and conduct training for the communities. Despite these efforts, NACOMAL reported insufficient funding to pursue its mandates and continuing coordination issues remained, specifically with the anti-human trafficking task force.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Liberia established policies related to child labor. However, it is unclear whether some of these policies are being implemented.</p>	<p>National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor: Aims to reduce child labor and the worst forms of child labor by 50 percent by 2030 through three strategic objectives, including increasing public awareness on the causes and consequences of the worst forms of child labor, strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks to reduce child labor, and increasing social services and protection for children of vulnerable households. During the reporting period, the government conducted a study on street children in Liberia which explored the reasons children were living and working on the streets. In addition, the study also examined the prevalence of children who were unhoused in different counties throughout the country.</p> <p>National Action Plan for Trafficking in Persons (2019–2024): Outlines the government's anti-trafficking efforts, including those for child victims, and creates benchmark goals related to human trafficking. Establishes roles and responsibilities for coordinating government assistance to human trafficking victims and provides shelter and care to children who may have been victims of human trafficking. Research was unable to determine whether activities were carried out under this policy during the reporting period.</p> <p>Social Welfare Policy: Focuses on the implementation and enforcement of existing child protection laws and prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that aim to assist children subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking. Research was unable to determine whether activities were carried out under this policy during the reporting period.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Liberia funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors where child labor has been identified, including in domestic work, rubber, diamond mining, and commercial sexual exploitation.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Liberia.</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>Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaign:† Aims to raise public awareness of human trafficking through the use of radio and billboard messages. During the reporting period, with international support, Liberian security agencies conducted events for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, which included trainings on human trafficking for security officials.</p> <p>Shelters:† The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection operates two shelters in Margibi and Montserrado counties. It also supports “one-stop centers,” which provide medical care, psychosocial support, and legal services for sexual and gender-based violence victims in other counties, including Lofa, Montserrado, and Nimba.</p> <p>Social Safety Net Program:† Aimed to establish the key building blocks of a basic national safety net delivery system and provide income support to households. The program was implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection and reached more than 25,000 households (about 105,000 individuals) in 4 counties (Bomi, Grand Kru, Maryland, and River Gee) with the Social Cash Transfer program and enrolled over 250,000 households in the Liberia Household Social Registry in five counties (Bomi, Bong, Grand Kru, Maryland, and Nimba). The program expired during the reporting period.</p>

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