



NAMIBIA

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Namibia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government enacted a National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Persons, which includes the goal of raising public awareness to protect children from trafficking. The government also sentenced two individuals to prison for child trafficking crimes and allocated USD \$34 million to provide relief for children and households impacted by drought, which is a cause of child labor in the country. However, despite these efforts, the government did not publish data on labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. Namibia also does not have a comprehensive policy that covers all worst forms of child labor in the country nor social programs that address child labor in agriculture and domestic work.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Namibia 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 agricultural work, domestic work, and street work.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Farming and fishing.



Services

Domestic work and street work, including vending.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking; use in illicit activities, including organized begging, selling of drugs, smuggling of fuel, diamonds, and wildlife products; forced labor in agriculture, fishing, and domestic work.

‡ 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 Namibia’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Ensure that Namibia’s light work framework prescribes the number of hours children ages 14 to 18 may work.

Enforcement

Publish information on criminal and labor law enforcement efforts undertaken during the reporting period, including labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, training for labor inspectors and criminal investigators, number and types of labor inspections conducted, child labor violations found, child labor-related penalties imposed and collected, number of criminal investigations, prosecutions initiated, and information about reciprocal referral mechanisms.

Ensure that training is provided to labor inspectors, including training of new inspectors and refresher courses, and ensure that training is provided to criminal law enforcement investigators on laws related to child labor, including training for new investigators.

Increase the number of labor inspectors to 65 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 968,400 workers.

Publish information on the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation’s SMS hotline, including the number of child labor complaints reported through the mechanism.

Ensure clear procedures at the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation for receiving, consolidating, and preparing child labor-related data submitted by stakeholders and publish data stratified by source to ensure information transparency.

Establish a mechanism to compile and publish comprehensive statistics related to labor and criminal law enforcement, including convictions for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont.)

Ensure that all Gender-Based Violence Protection Units and government shelters have adequate resources, including consistent funding, to operate according to their intended mandates.

Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies are sufficiently funded and resourced in order to adequately address worst forms of child labor.

Coordination

Ensure the National Advisory Council on Children, including its Interministerial Committee on Child Labor, is funded, fully active, and able to carry out its intended mandate of coordinating policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor.

Government Policies

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement policies relevant to child well-being, including the Social Protection Policy, and publish results from activities implemented on an annual basis.

Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as forced child labor in fishing, agriculture, street vending, and domestic work.

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.

Enhance efforts to make education accessible and affordable for all children, particularly in rural areas, including by expanding social support to orphaned children, reducing long travel distances to schools or improving transportation to schools, increasing the number of qualified teachers, and addressing the needs of students with disabilities and special learning needs.

Expand opportunities for birth registration and national documentation for all children to improve access to education and social programs.

Ensure that the Social Protection Grants program, Shelters and Victims Services, and Decent Work Country Program (2019– 2023) are active, and publish activities undertaken during the reporting period.

Institute programs or expand existing programs to address child labor in agriculture and domestic work, including for children of the San, Zemba, and Himba ethnic groups.

**CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**

An extended drought and economic downturn in northern Namibia and southern Angola have likely affected children's vulnerability to child labor, including its worst forms. Children from rural areas move to urban centers, such as Windhoek, in pursuit of supplemental income for their families, and some of these children are forced into selling drugs, begging, and commercial sexual exploitation. Growing numbers of migrant children from Angola are living in informal settlements where they are often at risk of being coerced into street vending, farming, or domestic work. Additionally, children of refugee status along the border of Namibia and Angola are increasingly trafficked and forced to smuggle drugs, fuel, diamonds, and wildlife products. Children of the San, Zemba, and Himba ethnic groups are particularly vulnerable to forced labor on farms and in homes.

**BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS**

Both primary and secondary education are free by law; however, long distances to schools, particularly in rural and remote locations, may deter some children from attending school and increase their vulnerability to child labor. The Education Act stipulates that no child be denied education due to documentation. However, reporting indicates inconsistent regional implementation of this law and that undocumented children face difficulty securing identification documents, which sometimes results in delays in enrollment and school admission. Finally, reports also highlight that the educational needs of children with disabilities or special learning needs have not been addressed due to the lack of specialized inclusive education teachers, disability friendly infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, and assistive technologies.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Namibia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Namibia’s laws do not meet the international standards on light work because its light work framework does not prescribe the number of hours children ages 14 to 18 may work.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 18 Years		Chapter 2, Article 3(2) of the Labor Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Chapter 2, Article 3(4) of the Labor Act; Article 2(2) of the Labor Act (Regulations Related to Domestic Work); Article 15(2) of the Constitution
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Chapter 2, Articles 3(3)(d) and 3(4) of the Labor Act
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Article 9 of the Constitution; Articles 200, 202, 234(1)(a) and 234(7) of the Child Care and Protection Act
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Sections 202 and 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Chapter 2, Article 1 and 3 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Section 200(1)(a) and 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Articles 1 and 3 of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Section 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years		Section 17 of Defense Act 1 of 2002 (Government Notice 189 of 2010)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Section 234(1)(b) of the Child Care and Protection Act
Compulsory Education Age, 18 Years		Section 9 of the Promulgation of Basic Education Act, 2020
Free Public Education		Sections 67 of the Promulgation of Basic Education Act, 2020

* Country has no conscription

Namibia’s light work framework for children ages 14 to 18 includes a list of prohibited activities for children, such as work done underground, in construction or demolition, in places in which goods are manufactured, in places in which electricity is generated or distributed, and any work at nighttime. However, Namibia’s light work framework is insufficient because it does not prescribe the number of hours children ages 14 to 18 may work.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, criminal law enforcement agencies in Namibia took actions to address child labor. However, there were no documented actions by labor law enforcement agencies.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation: Oversees the country’s labor inspectorate and ensures adherence and compliance to the Labor Act, 2007, including the prohibition of child labor. Operates a hotline that receives labor complaints, including child labor, via text message.

Ministry of Justice: Responsible for, along with the Namibian Police Force, enforcing criminal laws against forced child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, recruitment/use of child soldiers, or use of children in illicit activities. In 2023, two people were sentenced to prison for human trafficking crimes involving children.

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	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	Yes

In 2023, 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 or whether prosecutions were initiated, although **2** perpetrators were convicted.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Namibia established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, the government did not report specific activities undertaken during the reporting period.</p>	<p>National Advisory Council on Children: Coordinates government efforts on child welfare and rights. Comprises the Children’s Advocate and the Executive Directors of the Ministries responsible for health, education, youth, justice, labor, home affairs, and more. The Council houses an Interministerial Committee on Child Labor.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Namibia established policies related to child labor. However, these policies do not cover all worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor in fishing, agriculture, and domestic work.</p> <p><i>† Policy was approved during the reporting period.</i> <i>‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.</i></p>	<p>Social Protection Policy (2022–2030): Launched by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPEWSW), aims to improve coordination of social protection mechanisms and provides a framework to strengthen child grants through optimizing child grant-related data, reviewing and developing the implementation mechanism, and creating linkages between relevant government agencies.</p> <p>National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Persons (2022–2027):† Launched during the reporting period, the National Action Plan aims to strengthen and improve legislation related to trafficking in persons, secure sustainable financing for anti-trafficking in persons efforts, and enhance victim identification procedures, among other goals. The Plan places emphasis on the protection of child victims of trafficking in persons.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Namibia 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 where child labor has been identified, including in the agriculture sector and domestic work.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Namibia.</i> <i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p>Social Protection Grants:† MGEPEWSW-funded grants to support vulnerable children and households. Include child maintenance grants, place-of-safety allowances, and foster care grants. Child maintenance grants provide monthly stipends to single-parent families and are contingent upon school enrollment of all school-age children; place of safety and foster care grants provide support for people and places that provide temporary care for children. Research was unable to identify specific activities undertaken related to these grants during the reporting period.</p> <p>Shelters and Victims Services:† Government and NGO shelters provide safe accommodations, meals, clothing, toiletries, psychosocial support, legal assistance, medical services, and access to education. Registered residential childcare facilities provide services for children experiencing mistreatment and neglect. The government provides subsidies, either per child or as a percentage of operating expenses, for private shelter facilities. Research was unable to identify specific activities undertaken by government and NGO shelters during the reporting period.</p> <p>Decent Work Country Program (2019–2023): ILO-funded program which promoted decent work in Namibia, including the elimination of child labor, through employment promotion, enhanced social protection, and social dialogue and collaboration. Prioritized institutional capacity for implementation of child labor policies, and research and data collection on child labor and trafficking in persons. Research was unable to identify specific activities undertaken to implement the Decent Work Country Program 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