



PHILIPPINES

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, the Philippines made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established the Child Labor Knowledge Sharing System to monitor instances of child labor and approved the Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework for 2023–2028 to gradually reduce child labor through consultations with government institutions, local non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, faith-based groups, parents, and children. It also established a national coordination center against online sexual abuse and exploitation of children under the Department of Social Welfare and Development to develop and implement programs to prevent children from being victimized by online commercial sexual exploitation and to provide survivors of the crime with social services. However, limited financial and human resources and training on enhanced investigation techniques hindered enforcement efforts. In addition, children ages 15 to 18 are limited to eight hours a day and 40 a week, which may not be low enough to prevent prejudice to children’s compulsory education through age 18.

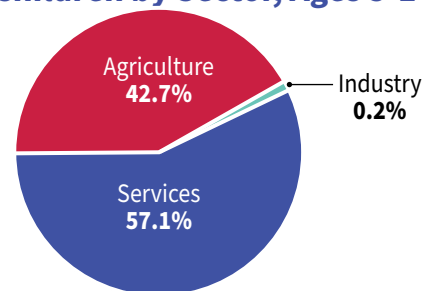


PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	1.9% (458,631)
Hazardous Work by Children	Unknown	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	92.0%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	2.0%

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Children in the Philippines 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 agriculture.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Producing sugarcane,† including growing, weeding,† harvesting,† cutting,† and carrying sugarcane bundles.† Also growing bananas, coconuts, corn, rice, rubber, and tobacco. Hog farming and deep-sea fishing.†



Industry

Mining† and quarrying,† including for gold. Also manufacturing pyrotechnics,† producing fashion accessories, and working in construction.†



Services

Engaging in domestic work and street work, including scavenging and begging.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Engaging in commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Also subjected to forced labor, including domestic work, forced begging, and use in illicit activities like drug trafficking. Recruiting of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict.

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

Legal Framework

Given that the compulsory education age is 18, ensure that limitations on hours of work for children prevent such work from prejudicing school attendance.

Enforcement

Increase funding to allow for the hiring of more law enforcement personnel, including police and prosecutors, operations, and equipment for forensic analysis of digital online sexual exploitation of children evidence.

Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.

Increase the number of labor inspectors from 1,210 to 3,137 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 47 million workers, and increase resources available to provide sufficient coverage of the workforce in all provinces, including in the informal sector where child labor is prevalent.

Allow Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams to conduct unannounced compliance visits to private homes to ensure that there are no child domestic workers being illegally employed.

Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations found and the number of child labor violations for which penalties imposed were collected.

Enhance efforts to prevent the inappropriate incarceration of, and violence against, children suspected to be participating in the production and trafficking of drugs and those caught in the crossfire during anti-drug operations.

Prosecute law enforcement officials and civilians responsible for the killing of children engaged in the drug trade and officials who are complicit in trafficking.

Develop procedures to allow for the efficient collection of restitution from convicted human traffickers and the restitution is transferred to their victims.

Government Policies

Publish activities carried out by the Basic Education Development Plan.

Social Programs

Publish activities undertaken to implement social programs to address child labor, including the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program and the SHIELD Against Child Labor program.

Increase access to free, compulsory education by eliminating unofficial school-related fees and addressing issues related to inadequate school infrastructure, including architectural barriers, especially for children in rural areas and children with disabilities.

Develop programs to increase protections for and provide assistance to child trafficking victims who are exploited for the purposes of domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation, particularly children from rural communities.

Develop programs to increase protections for and provide assistance to children engaged in drug trafficking and children impacted by the death of a familial breadwinner to address their heightened vulnerability to child labor.

Ensure that youth rehabilitation centers, including Houses of Hope (*Bahay ng Pag-asa*), are accredited and in compliance with standards set by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Many children in the Philippines are victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC), in which children perform sex acts at the direction of paying foreigners and local Filipinos for live internet broadcasts that take place in small internet cafes, private homes, or windowless buildings sometimes referred to as cybersex dens. The sector is highly profitable and growing due to increasing internet connectivity, widespread English language literacy, gaps in existing legislation and financial systems, and high international demand. Twenty percent of internet-using children between the ages of 12 and 17 in the Philippines have been exploited in OSAEC based on 2021 data. Children, primarily girls, from rural communities and disaster-affected areas, are also subjected to domestic trafficking in urban centers and tourist destinations for the purposes of domestic work and sex trafficking, and traffickers exploit these children in other forms of forced labor. As the Philippines is vulnerable to natural disasters including typhoons, tsunamis, volcanic activity, droughts, and erosion—and models indicate that the frequency and scale of these disasters will escalate in the coming years—an increasing number of children may be exposed to child labor. Additionally, the recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups, primarily the New People’s Army and Dawla Islamiyah, remains a concern in the country. These children are used in both combat and non-combat roles, including as supply officers, medics, and cooks, and for running errands.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Although the Constitution establishes free, compulsory education through age 18, unofficial school-related fees, such as for school uniforms, are prohibitive for some families. Other barriers to education include substandard infrastructure, which makes traveling and access to schools challenging, especially for children in rural areas, and architectural barriers that pose challenges for children with disabilities.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Philippines has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, the Philippines’ laws do not meet international standards on the minimum age for work because the minimum age of 15 is below the compulsory education age of 18 years.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 18 Years		Article 139 of the Labor Code; Sections 12 and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Section 16 of the Act Instituting Policies for the Protection and Welfare of Domestic Workers
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Article 139 of the Labor Code; Section 12-D of the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Department Orders 149 and 149A on Guidelines in Assessing and Determining Hazardous Work in the Employment of Persons Below 18 Years of Age; Sections 12-D and 14 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Sections 3, 4, and 10 of the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Sections 3, 4, and 10 of the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act

Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	✓	Section 11 of the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Sections 3, 4 and 10 of the Cybercrime Prevention Act; Sections 4 and 10 of the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials Act.
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	✓	Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Sections 5 and 8 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years	✓	Section 12 of the Providing for the Development, Administration, Organization, Training, Maintenance and Utilization of the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes Act
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	✓*	Section 14 of the Providing for the Development, Administration, Organization, Training, Maintenance and Utilization of the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes Act
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	✓	Sections 12-D, 16, and 22 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act
Compulsory Education Age, 18 Years ‡	✓	Section 4 of the Enhanced Basic Education Act
Free Public Education	✓	Section 2 of the Philippine Constitution

* Country has no conscription

‡ Age calculated based on available information

While children under 18 are subject to a light work framework limiting night work and hours of work, children ages 15 to 18 are limited to eight hours a day and 40 a week, which may not be low enough to prevent prejudice to children’s compulsory education through age 18.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in the Philippines took actions to address child labor. However, the labor inspectorate’s lack of a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations and lack of resources hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE): Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) manages the labor inspection program that oversees inspections conducted by DOLE regional offices nationwide. BWC also oversees training of labor inspectors, manages the DOLE Labor Inspection Management Information System, and responds to queries and complaints regarding labor standards and working conditions, including tips on potential child labor cases, received through the DOLE 1349 hotline. DOLE inspects establishments and monitors compliance with labor laws in the formal sector. Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC) oversees the Profiling Child Laborers Initiative, a program to identify child laborers and remove them from child labor situations. DOLE is mandated to develop policies, programs, and systems that champion the development and protection of disadvantaged workers by contributing to their decent and productive employment. BWSC also provides advisory and technical assistance to the Labor Secretary and regional offices. Additionally, it oversees the Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams (*Sagip Batang Manggagawa*) that detect, monitor, and rescue child laborers in hazardous conditions. During the reporting year, DOLE identified 160,288 child laborers and held events to raise awareness about child labor.

Criminal Law Enforcement Agencies: The Philippine National Police (PNP) investigate and prosecute cases related to the worst forms of child labor. Its Women and Children’s Protection Center (WCPC) enforces laws on child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children and has 269 personnel nationwide. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) investigates and prosecutes child labor cases and operates a national Task Force on the Protection of Children from Exploitation and Abuse. It also oversees the Anti-Human Trafficking Division, which investigates trafficking and illegal recruitment of children nationwide. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) enforces the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, maintains a national hotline for reporting cases of children used in illicit activities, and coordinates with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to assist during rescue operations. A lack of resources, including staff, is an area of concern within law enforcement agencies because it impedes their ability to act quickly upon complaints of child labor, including OSAEC, in both investigations and prosecutions.

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	No
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	Yes

In 2023, **1,210** labor inspectors conducted **29,221** worksite inspections, with an **unknown** number of child labor violations found. There were also **4** investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, with **22** prosecutions initiated and **9** perpetrators convicted.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>The Philippines established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.</p>	<p>National Council Against Child Labor (NCACL): Chaired by DOLE and co-chaired by DSWD, comprising 19 government agencies and organizations. Coordinates national efforts to combat child labor and implements the Philippine Program Against Child Labor. Promotes information-sharing at the national, regional, and provincial levels, and is tasked with establishing and disseminating a child labor reporting mechanism for use by local and national authorities. In 2023, met regularly to discuss efforts to address child labor, including launching a Child Labor Knowledge Sharing System website and a new helpline for reporting child labor. Also made efforts to localize NCACL coordination, which includes 14 functional regional councils.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>The Philippines established policies related to child labor. However, it is unknown whether activities were undertaken to carry out the Basic Education Development Plan.</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>Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework (2023–2028):[†] Aims to gradually reduce child labor through consultations with government institutions, local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, faith-based groups, professional associations, academia, the private sector, parents, and children. Implementation of the framework is led by the NCACL, with DOLE serving as Chair and DOLE’s BWSC and BWC as Joint Secretariat.</p> <p>Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) (2022–2030): Functions as a strategic roadmap to improve the government’s delivery and quality of basic education. Implemented and assessed by the Department of Education. Each level of governance (school, division, region, and national) will formulate its own basic education policies that will work to meet the goals of the BEDP. Department of Education’s planning offices review the policies and plans of each governance level to ensure congruency with the national plan. Research was unable to determine whether activities were carried out under this policy during the reporting period.</p> <p>National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2023–2027):[†] Mandated to prevent and suppress human trafficking, including online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and provide services to survivors, including rehabilitation, and reintegration into society through four key result areas: (1) Prevention, (2) Protection and Reintegration, (3) Prosecution and Law Enforcement, and (4) Partnership and Networking. Chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Justice and co-chaired by the Secretary of DSWD, employs a multi-stakeholder approach to fight human trafficking.</p>

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>The Philippines funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs were insufficient to address the needs of children engaged in drug trafficking given their heightened vulnerability.</p> <p>† Program is funded by the Government of the Philippines. ‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</p>	<p>Anti-Child Labor Programs: The Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program† is a DOLE anti-child labor program that implements local awareness-raising campaigns, institutes child labor-monitoring mechanisms, and requires neighborhoods to develop child labor elimination plans. Includes a provision of livelihood assistance to parents of child laborers, Sagip Batang Manggagawa, and Project Angel Tree. Project Angel Tree is a social service with local government agency benefactors, known as “angels,” who provide educational supplies to communities. In 2023, 12,567 child laborers were provided with school supplies, hygiene kits, food packs, grocery items, clothes, toys, and free services such as haircuts, medical and dental check-ups, entertainment, and psychosocial services. The Livelihood for Parents of Child Laborers (<i>Kabuhayan para sa Magulang ng Batang Manggagawa</i>)‡ is a DOLE program that provides livelihood assistance to parents, guardians, or other family members of child laborers. Seeks to prevent and eliminate child labor by providing necessary materials to start a livelihood undertaking. During reporting year, a total of 16,818 parents of child laborers were provided with livelihood assistance. The <i>Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program</i> (Conditional Cash Transfer Program) is a DSWD national poverty reduction program that provides conditional grants, local awareness-raising campaigns, and child labor-monitoring mechanisms to assist poor families with children’s access to health care, adequate nutrition, and education. Research was unable to determine activities undertaken by the <i>Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program</i> during the reporting period.</p>
	<p>Strategic Helpdesks for Information, Education, Livelihood and Other Developmental Interventions for Child Laborers (SHIELD Against Child Labor):† DSWD-led project implemented in 14 <i>barangays</i> in Catanauan, Labo, Jose Panganiban, Paracale, Kananga, and Ormoc City, with support from the ILO CARING Gold Mining Project. Comprises three components: Child Labor Local Registry; Helpdesk and Convergence of Services; and Advocacy, Organizing, and Capacity Building. Focuses on areas with a high child labor incidence rate, with interventions based on data from the Child Labor Local Registry. Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in the small-scale gold mining, deep-sea fishing, and sugarcane industries. During the reporting year, provided technical assistance and orientation to 345 local government units. Also identified 19,629 child laborers in the profiling system and provided assistance to 3,131 of them.</p>
	<p>Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP):† RRPTP is a DSWD and Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking program that provides recovery and reintegration services to survivors of human trafficking and raises awareness in vulnerable communities. Includes the National Referral System, which strengthens coordination among agencies providing services to human trafficking victims using standard referral and reporting forms. During the first quarter of the reporting year, research showed that the RRPTP served 138 child victims of trafficking.</p>

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

 **WORKER RIGHTS SPOTLIGHT**

The Philippines permits the widespread use of contract labor for workers in all industries, including agriculture. In rural agricultural areas, employers rely on “manpower cooperatives” to supply a significant amount of labor. Workers in these cooperatives are legally prohibited from forming unions. Workers who are unable to form unions are unable to engage in bargaining for wages and other terms and conditions at work, which keeps wages low and perpetuates the poverty that drives child labor in the Philippines.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports