

SENEGAL

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Senegal made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The president issued executive orders establishing a national committee to increase regulation, oversight, and inspection of traditional Koranic schools to prevent forced child begging. The government also provided food, furniture, and school supplies to Koranic schools to not engage in child begging. In addition, it continued a program that provided support to children living and working in the streets through placement in care centers, family tracing and mediation, and follow-up services to ensure their reintegration. The Anti-Trafficking Taskforce, in collaboration with international organizations and foreign donors, finalized standard operating procedures for law enforcement on the identification and investigation of trafficking cases. Finally, Senegal initiated an analysis of the informal labor market, targeting four major sectors in which children commonly work in dangerous conditions: fishing, mining, begging, and domestic work. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, its laws do not meet international standards because the use of a child in prostitution is not criminalized and the prohibition of the use of children in illicit activities lacks criminal penalties. Additionally, its forced begging provisions do not prohibit children from seeking alms, leaving some 180,000 children who may be subjected to forced begging without recourse. Lastly, although the government identified 138 children as potential trafficking victims and an additional 344 children as forced begging victims, it did not prosecute or convict any suspected perpetrators for the third consecutive year.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	22.3% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	53.0%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	13.9%

Children in Senegal are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in gold mining.

Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Fishing and farming.

various tasks on the street, including vending, garbage collection, and scavenging.



Industry

Mining gold, including washing ore, crushing rocks, and using mercury.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]

Forced labor in domestic work and gold mining. Commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.



Services

Welding, repairing automobiles, and performing maintenance on pirogues and construction work.

Domestic work, traditional handiwork, work in bakeries, and

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

Legal Framework

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

Criminalize the use of a child for prostitution.

Establish criminal penalties for the use of children in illicit activities.

Clarify forced begging provisions in the Penal Code and the Law Concerning the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons to explicitly prohibit all forced begging, including alms-seeking, under any circumstances.

Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include sectors in which child labor is known to occur and in which there are risks of sexual exploitation, including street work and domestic work.

Raise the minimum age for work from age 15 to age 16 to align with the age of completion for compulsory education.

Enforcement

Publish information on labor enforcement. Increase the number of labor inspectors to 128 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 5.1 million workers.

Ensure that labor inspections and enforcement are carried out in the informal sector, including in private homes and on farms. Ensure inspections of domestic work conditions and criminally prosecute cases of exploitation, including labor exploitation and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Ensure that training for criminal investigators adequately addresses issues related to the worst forms of child labor in Senegal. Ensure that criminal cases involving child victims are referred to the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security's Children's Unit.

Publish criminal law enforcement information on the worst forms of child labor, including the number of investigations, violations, and prosecutions, and whether penalties were imposed.

Criminally prosecute secondary school teachers who sexually exploit girls. Provide training for girls and their families so they can be sure of what constitutes harassment, know where to safely report exploitation, and have the assurance of community solidarity to reinforce their basic human rights. Establish social safety nets enabling girls who become pregnant to finish school and build networks of empowerment.

Investigate, prosecute, and, when appropriate, convict and sentence Koranic school teachers complicit in facilitating the worst forms of child labor, such as forced begging. Ensure that courts have sufficient resources, coordination, and independence to successfully prosecute cases.

Establish a formal complaint mechanism to receive child labor complaints, and track cases of child labor for referral to law enforcement or social services providers.

Coordination

Establish coordinating mechanisms to prevent and eliminate all worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and domestic work.

Ensure the Ministry of Labor's participation in the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons.

Government Policies

Adopt a national policy to address child labor.

Social Programs

Improve access to education by increasing the number of schools and teachers, especially in rural areas, increasing access to transportation, improving school infrastructure and sanitation, ensuring access to schools for students with disabilities, reducing school-related fees for supplies, providing all children with birth certificates and facilitating universal school registration, and protecting children in schools from sexual harassment and abuse.

Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of children's activities in the labor force. Use these data to establish policies and programs that address all forms of child labor, including domestic work, agriculture, mining, and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Ensure that shelter services are adequate to provide protective care to survivors of child trafficking and the worst forms of child labor. Conduct awareness-raising activities and provide social safety nets to families of rescued street children to ensure that children are not returned to forced begging.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Boys from rural areas and along Senegal’s borders are particularly vulnerable to forced begging, whose proceeds enrich corrupt Islamic teachers. An estimated 180,000 boys are forced to beg for long hours and live in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, receive inadequate food and medical care, and are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Girls, some as young as 12 years old, are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation near gold mining sites throughout the southeastern region of Kédougou. Adolescent girls are often transported from other countries, including Nigeria, for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation around the gold mines. In addition, many girls as young as 9 years old—known as *petites bonnes* in French or *mbidaan* in Wolof—are sent from rural areas to urban households to work. Under the pretext of a traditional cultural practice called *confiage*, parents send children to live with family or acquaintances to give the child better access to education and economic opportunities; many children are then subjected to forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Senegal has a shortage of schools and teachers, especially in rural areas. Students often have to pay for their own books, uniforms, and other school supplies, which discourages attendance. Lack of birth registration, transportation, and accommodations for children with disabilities impedes access to schools. Poor sanitation infrastructure, including a lack of running water and bathrooms, is also a barrier to education. Sexual harassment and abuse are widespread in secondary schools in Senegal; teachers sexually exploit girls, soliciting sex in exchange for money, goods, or good grades. One NGO reported that in certain cases, when girls rejected male teachers’ advances, they were penalized with lower grades and excluded from class activities. Research found that school directors were aware of sexual harassment or exploitation, they generally tried to resolve the situation on their own without reporting it to higher authorities or police, and girls were often stigmatized and faulted rather than the teacher. Girls were generally unsure of what constituted consent and harassment and did not know where to report exploitation. If girls became pregnant, they dropped out of school and were often shunned by their families.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Senegal has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Senegal’s laws do not meet international standards because the use of a child in prostitution is not criminalized, the prohibition of the use of children in illicit activities lacks criminal penalties, and military recruitment of children by non-state armed groups is not prohibited.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 15 Years		Article L. 145 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of the Decree Establishing the Scale of Penalties for Violations of the Labor Code and Associated Rules for Application
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Articles 1–3 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Article 1 of the Ministerial Order No. 3750 Determining the Types of Hazardous Work Prohibited for Children and Youth; Articles 1–3 of the Ministerial Order No. 3751 Determining the Categories of Business and Work Prohibited to Children and Youth
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Article 2 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Ministerial Order No. 3750 Determining the Types of Hazardous Work Prohibited to Children and Youth; Article 2 of the Ministerial Order No. 3751 Determining the Categories of Business and Work Prohibited to Children and Youth

Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles L. 4 and L. 279 of the Labor Code; Articles 2 and 4 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Articles 1 and 2 of the Law Concerning the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices and the Protection of Victims
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 1 and 2 of the Law Concerning the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices and the Protection of Victims
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Article 2 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Articles 323 and 324 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 2 of the Law Concerning the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices and the Protection of Victims
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Article 2 of the Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years		Article 19 of Law No. 2008-28
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		Article 19 of Law No. 70-23 on the Organization of National Defense; Law No. 2008-23
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		
Compulsory Education Age, 16 Years		Article 3 of Law No. 2004-37
Free Public Education		Article 3 of Law No. 2004-37; Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution

Senegalese law does not criminalize use of a child for prostitution. Articles 323 and 324 of the Penal Code criminalize procuring and offering for prostitution, but not use. Ministerial Order No. 3749 Determining and Prohibiting the Worst Forms of Child Labor bans the use of children in illicit activities, but neither this law, nor the Penal or the Labor Codes define specific criminal penalties for this offense. Section 245 of the Penal Code provides that “the act of seeking alms on days, in places, and under conditions established by religious traditions does not constitute the act of begging,” which makes it unclear whether forced begging by Koranic schools is criminally prohibited. Furthermore, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not include domestic work or street work, areas in which there is evidence of potential harm, including sexual abuse, to child workers. Because the minimum age for work is lower than the age of completion for compulsory education, children have an incentive to leave school before completing their studies. Finally, Senegal’s law does not prohibit the military recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Senegal took actions to address child labor. However, insufficient financial resources and training for investigators hindered enforcement efforts, including the prosecution of cases.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor, Social Dialogue, and Institutional Relations (MOL): Identifies and investigates labor code violations, including child labor cases. MOL maintains one inspectorate per administrative region. Inspectors refer criminal cases to the police or gendarmerie. In April 2023, MOL and the German Agency for International Cooperation convened a workshop in partnership with ILO, UNICEF, and local

stakeholders to evaluate the past efforts of the National Framework Plan to Combat Child Labor and develop an action plan to address child labor through 2027. The plan remained under development at the close of the reporting period.

Ministry of Justice (MOJ): Enforces and prosecutes criminal laws, including criminal violations of child labor laws. Through its Criminal Affairs and Pardons Branch, collects information and statistics on criminal cases involving forced child labor, child trafficking, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. In 2023, collaborated with international organizations to provide specialized training to law enforcement and judicial officials on anti-trafficking legal frameworks, investigative techniques, victim protection, and data collection.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	No
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	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

In 2023, 57 labor inspectors conducted an unknown number of worksite inspections and it is unknown 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

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Senegal has established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, while various bodies coordinated efforts to address forced child begging and the commercial sexual exploitation of children, there is no comprehensive coordinating body dedicated to preventing and eliminating all worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and domestic work.

National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons (Cellule Nationale de Lutte contre la Traite des Personnes [CNLTP]): Housed within MOJ and consists of the Ministry of Education; Ministry of Women, Family, Gender, and Child Protection; the National Police; and the Department of Social Services; it does not include the Ministry of Labor. The CNLTP oversees the government’s human trafficking prevention, including its campaign against forced child begging, and coordinates the government’s implementation of its 2021–2023 Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan (NAP). In 2023, the CNLTP met regularly to coordinate implementation of the NAP and drafted a national anti-trafficking communications strategy, including public awareness materials, which remained pending adoption at the end of the reporting period.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Senegal established policies related to child labor. However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a national policy to address all worst forms of child labor.

National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2021–2023): Structured around four priority areas: (1) prevention; (2) protection and care of survivors; (3) pursuit; and (4) research, monitoring, evaluation, and partnerships. Goals include raising awareness and advocating for legislation, conducting public awareness campaigns, improving the capacity of shelters and services for survivors, strengthening the capacity of criminal law enforcement and the judicial system, and improving regional cooperation. The plan was active during the current reporting period. In April 2023, the Action Plan was evaluated in a workshop to define strategic axes for the development of a new program to prevent and combat child labor covering the 2023–2027 period.

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p>	<p>Priority Action Plan, Phase 2: A long-term economic development strategy that includes the Emergency Removal of Street Children Program, which provides food, furniture, school supplies and other relevant materials to Koranic schools that are not engaged in child begging and to the shelters welcoming street children.</p> <p>National Strategy on Child Protection: Aims to strengthen child protection systems in Senegal. Organized around the pillars of prevention, care, and promotion of children's rights. During the reporting period, the government strengthened the mechanism aiming to reach children exploited in the worst forms of labor throughout Senegal. MOJ operates Educational Action in an Open Environment (AEMO) committees providing judicial, social, and educational assistance to children in vulnerable situations. In 2023, AEMO offices were established in 34 of the 46 departments of Senegal, with plans to deploy addition staff at the municipal and neighborhood levels.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Senegal funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, existing social programs are inadequate to address the full scope of the problem.</p> <p><small>† Program is funded by the Government of Senegal. ‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</small></p>	<p>Removal and Socioeconomic Reintegration Program for Children in Street Situations (2021–2024):† A 3-year, \$47 million program for the removal and socio-economic reintegration of children in street situations, administered by the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender, and Child Protection. Targets the identification and removal of children from forced begging, returns children to their families of origin, and provides them with shelter in a government-sponsored welcome center or approved Koranic schools or places children with foster families. However, sometimes children who have been returned to their families continued to be subjected to forced begging. Some activities continued in 2023, focused mainly on assisting Koranic schools.</p> <p>Centers and Shelters:‡ Include the Ginddi Center, run by the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender, and Child Protection with a budget of \$439,140 for victim services to abused and vulnerable children, including runaway talibés (students of Koranic schools), street children, and child trafficking survivors. Services provided to children include meals, shelter, basic medical care, psycho-social services, clothing, and vocational training. However, the center continued to lack sufficient space, limiting the number of victims authorities could assist as well as their length of stay. As a result, the government sometimes sent victims to NGOs or partner <i>daaras</i> (Koranic schools), where children received follow-on support services until family reunification. MOJ also managed transit houses in Dakar, Pikine, and Saint-Louis to provide education, rehabilitation, and reintegration services to survivors of child trafficking. In 2023, the government continued to operate these shelters.</p> <p>Programs to Counter Sex Trafficking in Kédougou, Senegal, (2022–2024): Implemented by the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery in partnership with Free the Slaves/ La Lumière and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Funded by the U.S. Department of State. Aims to address sex trafficking of girls and women in the gold-producing region of Kédougou by conducting prevalence research and enhancing capacity for prevention, prosecution, and protection. Research could not confirm whether the plan to provide shelter services to sex trafficking survivors from the mining sector or the training of law enforcement officers and magistrates to counter trafficking in persons in the region was completed.</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