



SOLOMON ISLANDS

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, the Solomon Islands made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and enacted the Education Act 2023, which increased the regulation of education, including formalizing training for teachers. However, despite these efforts, the Solomon Islands minimum age for work of 12 years does not meet the international standard of 14 years, and the Solomon Islands has not established a minimum age for hazardous work or delineated the types of work considered hazardous for children. Furthermore, there is no law that makes education compulsory, which increases children’s vulnerability to child labor.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Solomon Islands are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also preform dangerous tasks in alluvial mining.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Farming on plantations, including harvesting fruits, and the harvesting of seafood.



Industry

Alluvial mining.†



Services

Working as couriers; vending; domestic work, including working as cooks; working in nightclubs, casinos, and motels; pickpocketing; and garbage scavenging.



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking; use in illicit activities, including in the cultivation and trafficking of drugs; forced domestic work, including working as cooks; forced pickpocketing; forced begging; forced harvesting of seafood; handling of heavy cargo; and work in construction.

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of International Labor Organization Convention (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 Solomon Islands' implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.

Raise the minimum age for employment to age 14 to comply with international standards.

Establish age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work.

Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, including the types of work for which there is evidence of hazards, such as in scavenging and agriculture.

Establish by law a compulsory age of education that aligns with the international standard for the minimum age for employment.

Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the transfer of children for the purpose of child trafficking.

Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

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

Establish by law free basic public education.

Enforcement

Publish information on child labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, the number and type of labor inspections conducted, violations found, information about the training system for labor inspectors, and penalties imposed and collected.

Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of child labor investigations initiated, the number of prosecutions initiated, the number of convictions secured, and the sentences imposed.

Publish data about reciprocal referral mechanisms between labor and criminal authorities and social services.

Employ at least 9 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 369,000 workers.

Publish information about child labor-related training for labor inspectors and criminal investigators.

Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient financial and staffing resources to enforce child labor laws.

Government Policies

Adopt a policy that incorporates eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor as an objective.

Social Programs

Establish and participate in programs to prevent, address, and eliminate all forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, use in illicit activities, and forced labor in fishing and agriculture.

Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor nationwide to inform policies and programs.

Eliminate barriers to basic education, including by eliminating school-related fees and teacher absenteeism, improving access to school transportation, and ensuring that all schools are accessible for students with disabilities.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

In rural communities some boys, girls, and young women are recruited for domestic work and subsequently exploited in commercial sex at logging camps. Additionally, widespread social stigma against LGBTQI+ individuals in the Solomon Islands increases their vulnerability to human trafficking.













BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Teacher absenteeism, school fees, and transportation limitations present barriers to education access for students. Additionally, children with disabilities face distinct challenges accessing education due to a lack of accessible buildings and specialized teachers.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Solomon Islands has not ratified key international conventions concerning child labor, including the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. In addition, the Solomon Islands' laws do not meet international standards on the minimum age for hazardous work, identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children, and the prohibition on child trafficking.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 12 Years		Article 46 of the Labor Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work		Articles 47–49 of the Labor Act
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Articles 47–49 of the Labor Act
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles 251 and 256 of the Penal Code; Articles 70–79 of the Immigration Act
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 70–79 of the Immigration Act; Article 145 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 136, 136B, 141, 143, and 144 of the Penal Code; Articles 70 and 77 of the Immigration Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†	
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		
Compulsory Education Age		
Free Public Education		

† Country has no standing military

In 2023, the Government of the Solomon Islands ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. It also enacted the Education Act of 2023, which increased regulation of early childhood, primary, and secondary education, including registration of teachers, education providers, schools, and early childhood education centers. However, while the Education Act states that the compulsory school age begins at age 6, it does not specify an age when compulsory education ends. There are no laws that provide free basic education.

The Solomon Islands' minimum age for work, age 12, is not in compliance with the international standard of age 14 for developing countries. Additionally, although the Labor Act prohibits all children under age 18 from working at night and regulates work in mines and on ships, it does not clearly establish a minimum age for hazardous work or delineate the types of work considered hazardous for all children. The legal framework also does not prohibit dangerous work in scavenging or in agricultural activities, for which there is evidence of children being exposed to injuries, extreme temperatures, and chemicals. The Penal Code includes heightened penalties if an offense is committed against a child but has insufficient prohibitions against child trafficking because the transfer of children is not criminalized. Finally, the law also does not criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

It is unknown whether enforcement agencies in the Solomon Islands took actions to address child labor in 2023. Insufficient resources likely hamper the labor inspectorate’s capacity to enforce child labor laws. In addition, research indicates that the Solomon Islands does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labor and Immigration: The Ministry's Labor Division enforces the country's laws against child labor and forced labor and works to uphold the country's commitments to global labor standards through the International Labor Standards and Prosecution Unit. The Ministry's Immigration Division leads efforts to address human trafficking, including the trafficking of children.

Royal Solomon Islands Police: Enforce criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor. Jointly investigate human trafficking cases along with the Solomon Islands Immigration Division.

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	Unknown	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>The Solomon Islands established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, this mechanism does not address all worst forms of child labor in the country, including commercial sexual exploitation, use in illicit activities, and forced labor in fishing and agriculture.</p>	<p>Anti-Human Trafficking Advisory Committee (AHTAC): AHTAC members consist of law enforcement, service providers, and international organizations, and it was established to advocate for government and development support for gender-related violence and the trafficking of women, girls and vulnerable members of society for the purpose of sexual and labor exploitation. During the reporting period, the Committee endorsed a joint Cabinet paper for government accession to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and AHTAC's Communications Strategy.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>The Solomon Islands has established policies related to child labor. However, these policies do not cover all worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, use in illicit activities, and forced labor in fishing and agriculture.</p>	<p>National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling (2020–2025): Establishes a coordinated effort to eliminate human trafficking and people smuggling on the Solomon Islands. Implementation is led by AHTAC. Research was unable to determine what activities took place to implement the National Action Plan during the reporting period.</p>

Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)

<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p><i>† Policy was launched during the reporting period.</i></p>	<p>National Children's Policy (2023–2028):[†] Developed in partnership between the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs and UNICEF, the policy sets the government agenda and priorities for children to ensure that the rights of the child are at the center of development.</p> <p>National Education Action Plan (2022–2026): Launched by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the plan outlines key priorities and strategies to achieve the nation's educational goals. During the reporting period, the Government of the Solomon Islands enacted the Education Act 2023.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>The Solomon Islands funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating the worst forms of child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors and in all states where child labor has been identified, including commercial sexual exploitation, use in illicit activities, and forced labor in fishing and agriculture.</p> <p><i>* The program was established during the reporting period.</i></p>	<p>Anti-Human Trafficking Programs:[*] The government supported multiple anti-human trafficking programs during the reporting period, including by partnering with media organizations for a 3-day workshop to raise awareness on human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of women and children.</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