

# THAILAND

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Thailand made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Royal Thai Government initiated prosecutions against 197 individuals for engaging or attempting to engage in the commercial sexual exploitation of children, a sharp increase compared to 67 individuals prosecuted in 2022. The government also passed a resolution that allows unregistered migrant workers and their children, who are particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation and trafficking, to be registered and remain in the country through February 2025. In addition, it created an *ad hoc* labor protection network on the popular Thai online messaging platform called Line, which connects 2,106 members across 33 provinces, to exchange and publish information about child labor. Thailand's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force also implemented a new project to raise awareness of child trafficking and develop support and surveillance networks, targeting 600 students at public and private educational institutions. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, Thailand's minimum age protections do not meet international standards as the law does not grant protections to children working outside of formal employment relationships. Moreover, there remains a lack of available research and data on the prevalence of child labor in high-risk sectors, such as agriculture, garment manufacturing, domestic work, and construction.



## PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

### Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	13.0% (1,302,267)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	96.3%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	14.4%

Children in Thailand 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 the agriculture sector.

### Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



#### Agriculture

Working on farms, including animal farms, and planting and harvesting sugarcane; and working in fisheries and on sea vessels.†



#### Industry

Working in manufacturing, including garment production. Working in poultry factories. Also engaged in construction, including transporting building materials.



#### Services

Domestic work, restaurants, motor vehicle repair shops, gas stations, street work, including begging and vending, and *Muay Thai* fighting.



#### Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Commercial sexual exploitation, including in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Forced labor in vending, begging, domestic work, and producing garments. Used in the production and trafficking of drugs, including narcotics.

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

### Legal Framework

Extend the minimum age of work to apply to children who are working without monetary wages.

Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

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

Update hazardous occupations and activities that are prohibited for children to include sectors in which child labor is known to occur, including paid participation in *Muay Thai*, in which there is evidence that children are exposed to physical dangers.

### Enforcement

Publish information on criminal investigations and imposed penalties for worst forms of child labor crimes, as well as whether unannounced inspections were conducted.

Conduct unannounced inspections at remote workplaces, including in agriculture and domestic work, and ensure inspections occur without interference from business owners, local politicians, or authorities.

Provide interpretation services that enable labor inspectors to meaningfully interview foreign workers and ensure independence of the labor inspectorate from outside interests.

Ensure that fishing vessels employing children under age 18 to work as apprentices are fully complying with the protections required in the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Fishery Work to prevent the increased risk of child labor for apprentices.

Fully implement the National Referral Mechanism and provide training for officials and multidisciplinary teams, including at the local levels.

### Government Policies

Publish activities undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor, including the National Strategic Plan (2018–2037).

### Social Programs

Publish activities undertaken to implement key social programs related to child labor, including Centers to Promote Child Advocacy and for Victims of Trafficking and Migrants.

Improve access to education, especially for ethnic minority and migrant children, including by clarifying to school officials the necessary documents non-Thai students need to submit for enrollment, raising awareness of migrant children's right to education, increasing language and instructional support for non-Thai speakers, including on public school applications, and ensuring that Migrant Learning Centers are accredited.

Conduct child labor prevalence surveys to ensure that there are sufficient social programs to address exploitation of children in the agriculture, garment manufacturing, domestic work, and construction sectors.

Provide sufficient funding for social programs to assist children from vulnerable groups, such as migrant children and LGBTQIA+ children, who face barriers to education and are at high risk of child labor.



## CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

A widespread labor shortage, coupled with increased migration between Burma and Thailand due to the ongoing Burma military situation, resulted in increased numbers of underage migrant children engaging in child labor. These migrants are at higher risk of being exploited by recruitment agencies that falsify ages on official documents, resulting in children working while underage. In addition, an increased

number of children are reported to be exploited in forced labor and forced criminality in online scamming operations in Chinese-owned Special Economic Zones in neighboring countries. Thai children, as well as children from Burma, Laos, and Cambodia, are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Thai massage parlors, bars, karaoke lounges, hotels, and private residences. In addition, children are increasingly being coerced into producing pornography and performing sexual acts through online social media platforms and private chat rooms.



## BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

While Thai law provides for 12 years of free education for all children, language barriers prevent some non-Thai speaking children from accessing basic education as public school instruction and school applications are only available in Thai. Furthermore, although Thailand law does not require that children provide identity documents or a registered address for school enrollment, research found that some schools request documentation of non-Thai students, which may prevent their access to education. Some migrant and refugee communities have formed unofficial educational learning centers, including Migrant Learning Centers (MLCs), to provide children with native-language education or assist children who have had difficulty enrolling in or accessing Thai schools. However, most MLCs lack accreditation, and some have been subject to visits by immigration police to verify the legal status of migrant teachers and workers. This practice intimidated some migrant children and their families, resulting in reduced attendance of children at the MLCs. Children identifying as LGBTQIA+ and those experiencing poverty, drug addiction, family problems, and teen pregnancy may also face additional barriers to education access due to harassment and bullying.







## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Thailand has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Thailand's laws do not meet international standards on the minimum age for work because the labor code does not protect children working outside of employment relationships.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, <b>15 Years</b>		Sections 5, 44, and 148/1 of the Labor Protection Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, <b>18 Years</b>		Sections 22, 47, 49, 50, 144, and 148/2 of the Labor Protection Act; Sections 26 and 78 of the Child Protection Act; Sections 20 and 45 of the Home Workers Protection Act; Section 56/1 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Chapter 4, Sections 49 and 50 of the Labor Protection Act; Clause 4 of the Ministerial Regulation concerning Labor Protection in Sea Fishery Work; Clause 2 of the Ministerial Regulation Identifying Tasks that may be Hazardous to the Health and Safety of Pregnant Women or Children Under the Age of Fifteen Years
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Sections 312 and 312 <i>bis</i> of the Penal Code; Section 6, 8, 52, and 53 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Sections 282, 283, and 285 of the Penal Code; Sections 4 and 6 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (No. 3)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Sections 8 and 9 of the Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act; Section 4, 6, 6/1, 52 and 53 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 4 and 8 of the Royal Decree Amendments of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 282, 283, 285, and 286 of the Penal Code; Section 26 of the Child Protection Act; Amendment to Section 84 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Sections 4 and 26(5) of the Child Protection Act; Sections 93 and 93/2 of the Narcotics Act; Section 84 of the Penal Code; Section 22 of the Beggar Control Act
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, <b>18 Years</b>		Section 25 of the Military Service Act

**Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)**

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		Section 16 of the Military Service Act
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		
Compulsory Education Age, <b>16 Years</b>		Section 17 of the National Education Act
Free Public Education		Section 10 of the National Education Act; Section 54 of the Thai Constitution

The minimum age for work in Thailand does not comply with international standards because the law does not grant protections to children working outside of wage employment but may otherwise receive non-monetary benefits (e.g. food, shelter) in exchange for their work. In addition, the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age and, as a result, some children may leave school before the completion of compulsory education. Moreover, although Thailand has identified fishing on sea vessels as a form of hazardous labor—and research indicates that there is inadequate oversight of fishing vessels—the government implemented an amendment in 2022 to the Ministerial Regulation on Protection of Fishery Work 2014 allows owners of fishing boats to employ a relative as young as age 16 as an intern. The law does not prohibit the paid participation of children in *Muay Thai*, in which there is evidence that children who are participating for financial benefits are exposed to physical injury.



**ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR**

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Thailand took actions to address child labor. However, a lack of inspections in informal sectors and sectors primarily employing migrant populations hindered enforcement efforts.

**Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

**Department of Labor Protection and Welfare (DLPW):** Enforces child labor laws through workplace inspections. Operates Hotline 1506, a phone number that the public can use to make labor abuse complaints. Staffs DLPW offices in each province in Thailand to answer questions about working conditions and receive child labor complaints from the public. Reports indicate some labor inspectors intentionally overlook instances of child labor among migrant children due to fear of reprisal from business owners and local politicians and authorities. In 2023, labor inspections resulted in the identification of 477 children between the ages of 15 and 17 who were working in agriculture, which is often seasonal. The government also provided training to 104 labor inspectors in central and provincial areas during the year. Nonetheless, there are reports of child labor inspections in informal sectors being insufficient due to labor inspectors' inability to access remote workplaces and safety concerns for inspectors.

**Royal Thai Police (RTP):** Operate the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division (ATPD); the Thailand Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (TICAC); and the Child Women Protection, Anti-Human Trafficking, and Fishery Industry Center (CWP). ATPD enforces laws related to forced labor, human trafficking, child pornography, and commercial sexual exploitation of children, and operates Hotline 1191 to receive complaints on human trafficking and violence against children. TICAC investigates and enforces laws against child trafficking and online commercial sexual exploitation of children, including the distribution and production of child pornography. During the reporting period, TICAC initiated 540 investigations. CWP is responsible for protecting children, young people, women, and other workers from human rights violations at both the national and international levels. However, there were reports that human trafficking may be underreported due to inconsistencies in the identification process and training gaps, including the lack of awareness of human trafficking crimes amongst police, prosecutors, and judges. In 2023, CWP collaborated with non-governmental organizations to hold training workshops focused on preventing child trafficking, which were presented in 33 schools.

### 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	Yes
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	Unknown

In 2023, **2,501** labor inspectors conducted **17,847** worksite inspections. Although the government prosecuted **114** cases related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, it is **unknown** the number of 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><b>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</b></p>	<p><b>National Committee to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor:</b> Coordinates the implementation of child labor policies, facilitates cooperation among relevant ministries, and reports annually to the Thai Cabinet on child labor issues. Responsible for monitoring the National Policy and Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor. During the reporting year, met and monitored the progress of a draft amendment to the Boxing Act B.E. 2542 (1999), which would introduce measures to strengthen protections and improve safety for children participating in <i>Muay Thai</i> boxing. Also reviewed guidelines to prevent and address child labor and forced labor issues in the shrimp, fish, sugarcane, and garment industries.</p>
<p><b>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</b></p> <p>Thailand has established policies related to child labor. However, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Strategic Plan during the reporting period.</p>	<p><b>Fourth Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2023–2027):</b><sup>†</sup> Seeks to operationalize an integrated, cooperative approach to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Thailand, with five supporting sub-action plans focused on: (1) preventing all forms of child labor and providing public communication; (2) strong legal frameworks and effective enforcement; (3) providing assistance, protection, and rehabilitation to the victims of the worst forms of child labor; (4) promoting cooperation among government agencies in preventing and eliminating the worst forms of child labor; and (5) developing an administration, monitoring, and evaluation system for the action plan.</p> <p><b>Cyber Tipline Remote Access Policy:</b> Seeks to eliminate online sexual exploitation of children in Thailand by partnering with the U.S. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Supports TICAC by permitting the RTP to request warrants to search residences and electronic equipment for child pornography and initiate criminal prosecutions. In 2023, TICAC investigated 8,626 tips received through Cyber Tipline and a total of 358 victims were rescued.</p>
<p><sup>†</sup> Policy was approved during the reporting period. <sup>‡</sup> The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.</p>	<p><b>National Strategic Plan (2018–2037):</b> Seeks to improve education access, particularly for vulnerable and poor children in remote areas, by increasing transportation to school, reforming the school subsidy program for poor families, and providing scholarships for children who stay in school. Research could not determine what activities were undertaken during the reporting period.</p>

**Coordination, Policies, and Programs (Cont.)**

**Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Thailand funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, a lack of research and data on child labor prevalence in high-risk sectors (including agriculture, garment manufacturing, domestic work, and construction) makes it difficult for the Government of Thailand to design programs to address these issues.

*† Program is funded by the Government of Thailand.  
‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.*

**Centers to Promote Child Advocacy and for Victims of Trafficking and Migrants:**<sup>†</sup> Migrant Learning Centers (MLCs) are non-governmental- and government-operated centers that provide basic education, life skills training, and vocational training to children in migrant communities along Thailand's borders. The government reported that 65 registered MLCs supporting 10,808 students were in operation in 2022. In addition, the Migrant Educational Coordination Center was created to improve access to education for migrant children, support increased coordination of MLCs, and develop the capacity of teachers in MLCs. Research could not determine what activities were undertaken during the reporting period.

**Programs to Address the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:**<sup>†</sup> The Ministry of Tourism and Sports initiated the Child Friendly Tourism project by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with 21 government agencies, private sector organizations, and NGOs to develop measures to prevent and reduce commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry. Moreover, the Thailand Safe Internet Coalition, a partnership led by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS), UNICEF, and Thai telecommunications companies and internet service providers, was formed to strengthen reporting of online abuse, enhance coordination, improve service provision for survivors, and increase awareness of children, young people, and parents regarding online risks. During the reporting period, Child Friendly Tourism subcommittees met to discuss child-safe tourism, and the RTP also developed a Handbook for Child Safe and Friendly Tourism to support the subcommittee. Also organized a project to develop online and offline curricula to train tourism personnel to better protect child victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation; the training was given to 690 people.

**Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) Programs:**<sup>†</sup> Implements anti-trafficking projects through the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division (ATPD). Oversees Hotline 1300, which receives human trafficking and child labor complaints. Operates 77 temporary shelters, with one located in every province, and 9 long-term shelters for human trafficking survivors, including a shelter dedicated solely to boys. Monitors 76 Provincial Operation Centers for the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking. Provides assistance and welfare protection to survivors of human trafficking. In 2023, launched a campaign to raise awareness about online sexual exploitation of children and implemented a project to help local communities support at-risk youths, which reached 834 people and 23 local communities. However, research found that temporary shelters for trafficking survivors managed by MSDHS employed inconsistent policies and provision of care to victims, including a lack of psychologists and staff trained on trauma-informed care.

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit [dol.gov/ILABprojects](https://dol.gov/ILABprojects)

 **WORKER RIGHTS SPOTLIGHT**

Thailand imposes limitations on freedom of association, such as minimum worker requirements for union formation, lack of protections against anti-union discrimination, and restrictions on the right to strike in certain sectors. In addition, as migrant workers are legally barred from forming their own unions, labor abuse and exploitation are endemic to the country's migrant-dominated labor sectors, such as agriculture, seafood processing and fishing.

For references, please visit [dol.gov/ChildLaborReports](https://dol.gov/ChildLaborReports)