



WESTERN SAHARA

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Morocco made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Kingdom of Morocco claims the territory of Western Sahara and administers the area that it controls with the same constitution, laws, and structures as in internationally recognized Morocco, including laws that deal with child labor. Morocco adopted a roadmap to eliminate child labor by 2030 as part of its commitment as a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7 and adopted the National Plan to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking 2023–2030, along with the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking. It also increased its number of labor inspectors from 500 in 2022 to 585 in 2023 and nearly doubled the number of labor inspections completed in a single year from 29,068 in 2022 to 48,123 in 2023. However, the Labor Code's minimum age for work provisions do not meet international standards as children 15 years of age and under are not protected when working in traditional artisan and handicraft sectors. Furthermore, barriers to education such as insufficient facilities, school fees, and lack of transportation can prevent children from attending school, increasing their risk of engaging in child labor.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Western Sahara are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in artisanal crafts, textiles, construction, and mechanics.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Morocco's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Ensure that all children aged 15 and under are protected by law, including children who work in artisan and handicraft sectors for family businesses.

Ensure that the law establishes 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for volunteers.

Criminally prohibit the use of a child for prostitution.

Coordination

Establish a mechanism to coordinate government efforts to address all worst forms of child labor in the country.

Social Programs

Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, including in rural areas and in forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.

Conduct a comprehensive study of children's activities to determine whether they are engaged in or at risk for involvement in child labor and to inform policies and programs, including in farming, forestry, domestic work, and the informal sector.

Remove barriers to education, such as insufficient facilities and a lack of reliable and safe transportation, particularly in rural areas.

Provide child protection units the resources to provide appropriate care to victims, including hiring a sufficient number of social workers.















BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children, particularly in rural areas, are vulnerable to child labor due to educational barriers similar to those faced in other locations in Morocco, such as insufficient facilities and lack of reliable and safe transportation.

 **LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR**

Western Sahara is subject to the same laws as internationally recognized Morocco. Morocco has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor, which the government extends to the areas in Western Sahara that it controls. However, Morocco’s laws do not meet international standards on minimum age for work because the law does not cover children working in businesses with fewer than five employees. In addition, there is no minimum age for voluntary state military recruitment.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 15 Years		Articles 4, 143, and 151 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Law No. 19-12
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Articles 147, 150, and 181 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Law No. 19-12
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Hazardous Child Labor List, Decree No. 2-10-183; Articles 179 and 181 of the Labor Code
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles 448.1 and 448.4 the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings; Articles 10 and 12 of the Labor Code; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 497–499, and 503-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Law number 1-73-282; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		Article 4 of Law No. 44-18
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings
Compulsory Education Age, 15 Years		Article 1 of Law No. 04-00
Free Public Education		Article 1 of Law No. 04-00

The Labor Code does not apply to children who work in the traditional artisan or handicraft sectors for family businesses with five or fewer employees.

 **ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR**

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Morocco, including Western Sahara, took actions to address child labor.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills (MEIPEEC): Enforces child labor laws with its 54 inspection offices throughout the country. Partners with civil society organizations working to remove children from child labor and provide them with an education or vocational training. MEIPEEC's priorities in the 2023 National Labor Inspection Plan included addressing child labor and focusing on the agricultural, construction, handicraft, textile, and automotive sectors.

General Prosecutor: Prosecutes criminal offenses against children and processes cases involving children in the court system. Serves independently as a judiciary body separate from the Ministry of Justice.

Enforcement information for Western Sahara is not tracked separately from Morocco. In Morocco, **585** labor inspectors conducted **48,123** worksite inspections. There were also **57** investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, although the number of prosecutions initiated, and perpetrators convicted is **unknown**.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Morocco established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, this coordinating mechanism does not address all forms of child labor in the country.</p>	<p>National Commission for the Coordination of Measures to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons (CNCLT): Coordinates the government's efforts to address trafficking in persons. Led by the Ministry of Justice, with 22 members representing various ministries and civil society organizations. In March 2023, the CNCLT adopted the National Plan to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings 2023–2030 and the National Strategy to Address Trafficking in Persons 2023–2026. The National Plan also includes the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking to coordinate trafficking victim identification and referral to services.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Morocco established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor.</p> <p><i>† Policy was approved during the reporting period.</i></p>	<p>Roadmap to Eliminate Child Labor in All Its Forms by 2030:[†] Has three main strategic priorities which include: (1) addressing poverty, education, and professional skills; (2) improving national regulations of working children; and (3) improving governance monitoring and evaluation. Through these actions, Moroccans seek to eliminate child labor among those under 15 years of age and stop 16- to 18-year-olds from participating in hazardous work. Accepted by MEIPEEC in June 2023.</p> <p>Ministry of Solidarity, Social Inclusion, and Family (MSISF) Integrated Public Policy on the Protection of Children: Promotes an interdisciplinary approach to respond to the exploitation of children and other issues. MSISF operates 41 child protection units that exist to protect children from all kinds of abuses, including child victims of trafficking. NGOs have raised concerns that there are not enough social workers to support these units.</p> <p>National Strategy to Address Trafficking in Persons:[†] Aims to raise awareness of human trafficking and improve the identification and referral of victims to services. Strategy provides for regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure that objectives are being met and describes stakeholder responsibilities. Enacted in March 2023 with assistance from international partners. Meetings held in 2023 to begin strategy implementation including provision of temporary housing assistance to victims.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Morocco funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate because they do not address child labor in all sectors.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Morocco.</i></p>	<p>Social Cohesion Support Fund:[†] Programs that aim to improve access to education. Also provides direct support to orphans and others in vulnerable situations. These efforts continued throughout the reporting period. Included the MSISF-funded Tayssir Conditional Cash Transfer Program, which provided direct cash transfers to qualifying families whose children meet school attendance criteria. These cash transfers continued until the program ended in November 2023.</p> <p>Government-Funded Education Projects:[†] Projects that aim to assist vulnerable children, including the After-School Program for a Second Chance, which provides students with after-school educational assistance as part of non-formal education programs. There are 161 centers involved in the program, which remained active in 2023. The Child to Child program was also active in 2023; it both promotes school enrollment and assists students who have dropped out of school. A related program, Caravane for Direct Integration, worked with 7,835 students who had dropped out of school to complete end-of-studies exams in the 2022–2023 school year.</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