

# Liberia

*The Government of Liberia launched youth employment programs, published research, and conducted awareness-raising campaigns to combat the worst forms of child labor. Hazardous child labor continues to exist however, especially in agriculture, mining, and rubber tapping. Liberia does not yet have a comprehensive policy to combat exploitive child labor, especially its worst forms, and does not effectively enforce its child labor laws.*

## Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Percent
Working	Unavailable
Attending School	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	Unavailable



## Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children are exploited in the worst forms of child labor in Liberia, many of them in hazardous work.<sup>2897</sup> A number of working children are engaged in agriculture where they may work long hours, perform physically arduous tasks, use dangerous tools, and face a high risk of occupational injury.<sup>2898</sup> On some rubber plantations, children are commonly employed to tap rubber trees, clear brush, and carry buckets.<sup>2899</sup> Children work in stone cutting and the mining of natural resources, including alluvial diamonds and gold.<sup>2900</sup> Children are also employed as domestic servants.<sup>2901</sup> In such work, they may work long hours and their isolation in homes may put them at risk of physical and sexual harassment. Children transport heavy loads as porters, truck loaders, and sand baggers, and some children are employed to carry imported goods from Côte d'Ivoire into Liberia and load them onto commercial trucks.<sup>2902</sup> Children are also employed as domestic servants.<sup>2903</sup> In such work, they may work long hours and their isolation in homes may put them at risk of physical and sexual harassment. Children, especially girls, engage in prostitution.<sup>2904</sup> Some children are trafficked within and outside of Liberia for domestic service and exploitive labor.<sup>2905</sup>

Liberia was engaged in intermittent conflict from 1990 to 2003 and the long term effects leave many children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. This long period of war displaced entire communities and destroyed the country's political, economic, and physical infrastructure. Thousands of children were recruited by armed groups during the conflict to serve as combatants or sex slaves. Liberia remains mired in poverty. Nearly 64 percent of the entire population lives under the absolute poverty line.<sup>2906</sup>

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Liberia has laws to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. The Labor Law sets the minimum age for work at 16 years. Children under age 16 are prohibited from working during the school day and may only work for wages if the employer can demonstrate that they are attending school regularly and have a basic education.<sup>2907</sup> Labor recruiters are permitted to hire children between ages 16 and 18 for occupations which the Ministry of Labor determines are not harmful to children's physical and moral development.<sup>2908</sup> The law does not establish adequate prohibitions against the involvement of children in hazardous activities. In particular, the law does not prohibit the use of children in work that

exposes them to sexual, physical, and psychological abuse; takes place underground or in confined spaces; and involves the transport of heavy loads, all of which occur in sectors where Liberian children work. Further, the law does not provide a comprehensive list of hazardous activities in Liberia that are forbidden to children under age 18.<sup>2909</sup>

The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia prohibits forced and bonded labor and slavery.<sup>2910</sup> An Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons within the Republic of Liberia criminalizes the trafficking of children for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor.<sup>2911</sup>

	C138, Minimum Age	No
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	No
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	11
	Free Public Education	Yes

## Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Government of Liberia has established mechanisms for monitoring issues related to the worst forms of child labor and designated institutions for child labor enforcement.

The National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL) is charged with monitoring child labor issues and directing policies. The commission is headed by the Ministry of Labor and includes representatives from the Ministries of Health & Social Welfare, Gender & Development, and Youth

& Sports.<sup>2912</sup> The objectives of NACOMAL include awareness raising, reforming national child labor laws, and designing a national child labor database.<sup>2913</sup> However, the commission's efforts are hindered by a lack of reliable data because the national statistics office does not conduct child labor surveys and has limited capacity to collect data for strategic planning and evidenced-based policies.<sup>2914</sup> Serious budgetary constraints also impede the commission's efforts.<sup>2915</sup>

NACOMAL is also responsible for enforcing child labor laws. NACOMAL conducted two investigations in 2009; neither of these resulted in any prosecutions.<sup>2916</sup>

In addition to NACOMAL, the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the Liberia National Police Force contributes to the enforcement of child labor laws. WACPS has 245 investigators who are primarily trained on women's issues. However, WACPS is not responsible for child labor investigations. If WACPS investigators identify exploited children in the course of their work; they will attempt to resolve the situation.<sup>2917</sup> There are limited opportunities for NACOMAL and WACPS to collaborate. NACOMAL does not have permanent field staff and representatives from WACPS, the Liberian National Police Force, or the Ministry of Justice do not participate in the commission as members or observers.<sup>2918</sup> WACPS did not report any child labor prosecutions 2009.<sup>2919</sup>

Liberia also has mechanisms in place for monitoring and law enforcement of criminal violations of the worst forms of child labor. The Ministries of Justice and Labor are responsible for enforcing anti-trafficking legislation.<sup>2920</sup> The Government coordinates anti-trafficking activities through the National Human Trafficking Task Force.<sup>2921</sup> The Task Force is chaired by the Ministry of Labor with representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs, the national police, and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization.<sup>2922</sup> The Task Force meets on a monthly basis.<sup>2923</sup> Task Force members assist the Liberian National Police with human trafficking investigations and monitor court cases.<sup>2924</sup> The Task Force also publishes reports that are accessible to the public.<sup>2925</sup> Despite the Task Force's efforts, the Government of Liberia did not prosecute any child traffickers or provide anti-trafficking training to police officers during the reporting period.<sup>2926</sup>

## Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Liberia has not established a policy framework to promote the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. However, it has undertaken a Country Program Action Plan (2008-2012) with UNICEF that seeks to reduce the vulnerability of children to exploitation, including child labor and child trafficking.<sup>2927</sup> The plan calls for UNICEF to complete a national child labor analysis and build the capacity of Liberian institutions to prevent child trafficking and the worst forms of child labor.<sup>2928</sup> The plan provides indicators, targets, and sources of data to measure UNICEF's progress.<sup>2929</sup> The Government and UNICEF intend to conduct a midterm evaluation of the plan in 2010. The plan indicates that UNICEF will create detailed annual work plans with implementing partners that will list specific actions, inputs, and outputs.<sup>2930</sup>

The Government of Liberia has included child labor issues in several relevant development agendas and social policies. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Liberia (2008-2012) tasks ILO with reforming national labor laws in accordance with ILO conventions and assisting in the implementation of child labor policies.<sup>2931</sup> It also requires other UN agencies to promote youth employment and increase access to quality education.<sup>2932</sup> The Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2011) recognizes the links between household income and child labor and highlights the importance of protecting children from physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.<sup>2933</sup> Liberia's National Social Welfare Policy prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that target child labor and child trafficking.<sup>2934</sup> The National Youth Policy for Liberia identifies children working in the informal sector, children living and working in the streets, and children associated with armed groups as priority target groups for assistance.<sup>2935</sup>

While these policies address child labor concerns, the Government does not have a national child strategy that coordinates all of its child labor activities and provides concrete targets to protect children from exploitation in hazardous work and human trafficking.<sup>2936</sup>

## Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Liberia has participated in the implementation of programs to eliminate the worst forms of child labor since 2003, when it emerged from more than a decade of civil war. Most programs have sought to remediate child labor issues that were created or exacerbated by the conflict. From 2003 to 2006, the Government's National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration in collaboration with UNICEF, the UN Mission in Liberia, and other partners demobilized 10,963 child combatants.<sup>2937</sup> From 1998 to 2007, the Government implemented the accelerated learning program in partnership with UNICEF and other international organizations to provide primary education to children whose schooling was interrupted by armed conflict.<sup>2938</sup> The Government participated in the USDOL-funded \$6 million Child Labor Education Initiative project in Sierra Leone and Liberia from 2005 to 2010 that was implemented by the International Rescue Committee. This 4-year project, which was launched in 2005 withdrew a total of 8,243 children and prevented a total of 21,647 children from exploitive child labor.<sup>2939</sup>

During the reporting period, the Government supported the UN Joint Program for Employment and Empowerment of Young Women and Men in Liberia, which aims to produce decent employment for disadvantaged youth in the informal economy and agriculture.<sup>2940</sup> The Government also published the National Youth Policy Action Plan, which provides youth of legal working age with training in entrepreneurship skills and linkages to business mentoring programs and cooperatives.<sup>2941</sup> The Government signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF. In this memorandum, the Government agreed to establish child protection focal points in all military barracks and design a child rights and child protection training program for all military officers and civilian staff in the Liberian Ministry of National Defense.<sup>2942</sup>

In partnership with UNICEF, the Government finalized a situational analysis of human trafficking in Liberia.<sup>2943</sup> The Government also organized media campaigns about the negative impacts of human trafficking.<sup>2944</sup> The Government's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) continued to investigate the individual and systematic use of child

soldiers in Liberia from January 1979 to October 14, 2003 and issued its final report.<sup>2945</sup> The report noted that all armed groups under the TRC's review used child soldiers.<sup>2946</sup> While the Government's efforts to eradicate child labor increased in 2009, the scope of existing programs is insufficient to address the scope of the problem in Liberia.

### Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Liberia:

#### IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Include a clear prohibition against children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor.
- Define hazardous work in Liberia that is prohibited to children under 18.

#### IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Establish a national database to monitor children's engagement and removal from the worst forms of child labor.
- Conduct national child labor surveys to inform strategic planning and evidence-based policies.
- Integrate representatives from the WACPS, Liberian National Police Force, or the Ministry of Justice into the National Commission on Child Labor.
- Develop a national database to monitor trafficking violations.

#### IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Develop a comprehensive annual work plan to eradicate child labor and evaluate its effectiveness.

#### IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Increase the scope of existing social programs to reach more children at risk of the worst forms of child labor.

<sup>2897</sup> Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are not available from the data sources that are used by USDOL. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. For more information on sources used for these statistics, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section.

<sup>2898</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Liberia," section 7d. See also Government of Liberia and Macro International, *Liberia Demographic and Health Survey*, 17.

<sup>2899</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Liberia," section 7d. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, January 20, 2009, para 2e. See also UN Mission in Liberia, *Human Rights in Liberia's Rubber Plantations: Tapping into the Future*, Monrovia, May 2006, 44-46; available from [http://unmil.org/documents/human\\_rights\\_liberiarubber.pdf](http://unmil.org/documents/human_rights_liberiarubber.pdf).

<sup>2900</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Liberia," section 7d. See also UN Mission in Liberia, *Report on the Human Rights Situation in Liberia: January -- June 2009*, Monrovia, May 2009, para 41; available from <http://unmil.org/>. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, January 20, 2009, para 2e. See also UN Security Council, *Seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia*, New

York, August 15, 2008, para 19; available from <http://www.unmil.org/documents/sgreports/sg17pr.pdf>.

<sup>2901</sup> International Rescue Committee, *Countering Youth and Child Labour Through Education (CYCLE)*, Project Document, New York, August 2007, 9. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, January 20, 2009, para 2e. See also U.S. Department of State, “Liberia,” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/index.htm>.

<sup>2902</sup> Government of Liberia and Macro International, *Liberia Demographic and Health Survey*, 17-18. See also International Rescue Committee, *Countering Youth and Child Labour Through Education (CYCLE)*, 9. See also Government of Liberia Ministry of Gender and Development official, Interview, June 26, 2006. See also Women’s Refugee Commission, *Dreams Deferred*, 2-3.. See also UN Mission in Liberia, *Human Rights Situation in Liberia*, para 42.

<sup>2903</sup> International Rescue Committee, *Countering Youth and Child Labour Through Education (CYCLE)*, 9. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, January 20, 2009, para 2e. See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Liberia.”

<sup>2904</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Liberia,” section 6. See also Save the Children UK, *From Camp to Community: Liberia Study on exploitation of children*, Monrovia, May 8, 2006, 10; available from [http://www.savethechildren.it/2003/download/pubblicazioni/Liberia/Liberia\\_sexual\\_exploitation\\_edited\\_LB.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.it/2003/download/pubblicazioni/Liberia/Liberia_sexual_exploitation_edited_LB.pdf)

<sup>2905</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Liberia.” See also UNICEF, *News note: Liberia launches its situational analysis report on human trafficking*, Monrovia, March 1, 2010; available from [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_52882.html?q=printme](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_52882.html?q=printme).

<sup>2906</sup> UNICEF, *The Country Programme Action Plan 2008-2012 between The Government of Liberia and the United Nations Children’s Fund*, 2008, paras 3 and 4; available from [www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO\\_Pub\\_Liberia\\_CPAP08-12.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Pub_Liberia_CPAP08-12.pdf).

<sup>2907</sup> Government of Liberia, *Labor Law (Title 18 and 18A)*, (1956), section 74; available from [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex\\_browse.details?p\\_lang=en&p\\_country=LBR&p\\_classification=01.02&p\\_origin=COUNTRY&p\\_sortby=SORTBY\\_COUNTRY](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_country=LBR&p_classification=01.02&p_origin=COUNTRY&p_sortby=SORTBY_COUNTRY).

<sup>2908</sup> *Ibid.*, 1506, para 11. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, January 20, 2009, para 2a.

<sup>2909</sup> Government of Liberia, *Labor Law (Title 18 and 18A)*, section 74. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, January 20, 2009, para 2a. See also

<sup>2910</sup> Government of Liberia, *Constitution of the Republic of Liberia*, (January 6, 1986 ), article 12; available from <http://www.tlcafrica.com/constitution-1986.htm#chapter3>.

<sup>2911</sup> Government of Liberia, *An Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons within the Republic of Liberia*, (2006).

<sup>2912</sup> Government of Liberia, *Ministry of Labour; National Commission on Child Labour (NACOMAL); Plan of Action 2007-2016*, Monrovia, 2007, 1-2. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, January 20, 2009, 2b.

<sup>2913</sup> Government of Liberia, *Ministry of Labour; National Commission on Child Labour (NACOMAL); Plan of Action 2007-2016*, 3.

<sup>2914</sup> U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, January 20, 2009, para 2e. See also Government of Liberia and UNDP, *Liberia’s Progress Towards the Millenium Development Goals* Monrovia, 2008, 8; available from <http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=CoordinationProfile&page=Country&CountryID=LIR>.

<sup>2915</sup> U.S. Embassy-Monrovia, *e-mail communication to USDOL official*, November 19, 2010.

<sup>2916</sup> U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, February 1, 2010, para 2c. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Liberia,” section 7d.

<sup>2917</sup> U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, February 1, 2010, paras 2c and 2g.

<sup>2918</sup> *Ibid.*, para 2c. See also Government of Liberia, *Ministry of Labour; National Commission on Child Labour (NACOMAL); Plan of Action 2007-2016*.

<sup>2919</sup> U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, February 1, 2010, para 2c.

<sup>2920</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Liberia,” section 6.

<sup>2921</sup> U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>2922</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Liberia,” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009*, Washington, DC, June 16, 2009; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/123137.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, February 1, 2010, para 2b.

<sup>2923</sup> U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting*, February 1, 2010, para 4c.

<sup>2924</sup> *Ibid.*, para 4d.

<sup>2925</sup> *Ibid.*, para 2d.

<sup>2926</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Liberia.”

<sup>2927</sup> UNICEF, *Country Programme of Action 2008-2012*, paras 49 and 51.

<sup>2928</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 and 44.

<sup>2929</sup> Ibid., 42 and 44.

<sup>2930</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2931</sup> United Nations Development Group, *United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Liberia 2008-2012: Consolidating Peace and National Recovery for Sustainable Development*, May 2007, 37; available from <http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=CoordinationProfile&page=Country&CountryID=LIR>.

<sup>2932</sup> Ibid., 27, 40.

<sup>2933</sup> Government of Liberia, *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, International Monetary Fund, Washington, July, 2008, 185-187; available from <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sctr/2008/cr08219.pdf>.

<sup>2934</sup> Government of Liberia, *Social Welfare Policy*, Monrovia, March, 2009, xi, 9; available from <http://liberiamohsw.org/Policies&Plan.html>.

<sup>2935</sup> Government of Liberia, *A National Youth Policy for Liberia: A Framework for Setting Priorities and Executing Action*, Monrovia, December, 2005, 20-22; available from [flyliberia.org/Youth%20Policy%20-%20Final%20Doc%2006.doc](http://flyliberia.org/Youth%20Policy%20-%20Final%20Doc%2006.doc).

<sup>2936</sup> U.S. Embassy- Monrovia, *reporting, February 1, 2010*, para 2e.

<sup>2937</sup> UN Security General, *Children and armed conflict; Report of the Secretary General*, New York, October 26, 2006, para 56; available from <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/61/529>. See also Thomas Jaye, *Transitional Justice and DDR: The Case of Liberia*, June, 2009, 2; available from [www.ictj.org/static/Publications/Jaye\\_Li\\_DDR\\_Liberia\\_ResearchBrief\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ictj.org/static/Publications/Jaye_Li_DDR_Liberia_ResearchBrief_2009.pdf)

<sup>2938</sup> UNICEF, *Liberia Accelerated Learning Program (2007); Presentation on the Achievements and Challenges of the Accelerated Learning Programme*, 2007; available from [info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/.../LiberiaALPPPTpresentation.pdf](http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/.../LiberiaALPPPTpresentation.pdf).

<sup>2939</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, *Technical Cooperation Summary-Countering Youth and Child Labor Through Education in Sierra Leone and Liberia (CYCLE)*, Washington, DC, 2009; available from <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/map/countries/liberia.htm>.

<sup>2940</sup> UN Development Group, *UN Joint Program for Employment and Empowerment of Young Women and Men in Liberia.*, February 16, 2009, 2,4,6,8; available from <http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=JointProgramme&page=JointProgrammeView&CountryID=&&JointProgrammeID=566&>

<sup>2941</sup> Jane C. Miller Wood Gary Walker, and Eric Allemano,, *Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment*, USAID, Washington, April 2009, 5,30,31; available from [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADQ258.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADQ258.pdf)

<sup>2942</sup> UNICEF, *Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of National Defense and United Nations Children's Fund*, Monrovia, October, 2009; available from <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/ASAZ-7X2HZB?OpenDocument&query=memorandum%20of%20understanding'&cc=libr>.

<sup>2943</sup> UNICEF, *Liberia situational Analysis on human trafficking.*

<sup>2944</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Liberia."

<sup>2945</sup> Government of Liberia, *An Act to Establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia*, (May 12, ), article IV(4a,4e), article VII(26h-g); available from <https://www.trcofliberia.org/scholarly-resources/documents/an-act-establishing-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-trc-of-liberia>. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Liberia," introduction.

<sup>2946</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Liberia," introduction.