

Uganda

The Government of Uganda continues to implement policy initiatives and some programs for the prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including for children affected by war. However, significant gaps remain in the Governments law enforcement efforts. In addition, there continue to be reports of forced child labor in the agriculture, fishing, and domestic labor sectors.



Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	31.1
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	84.2
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	35.3

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor⁵⁹⁰⁹

Children in Uganda are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, primarily agriculture and domestic service.⁵⁹¹⁰ It is estimated that the majority of children who work in Uganda are found in agriculture, producing coffee, tea and tobacco. Children who work on tobacco farms in Uganda are exposed to health hazards and risk developmental defects due to long working hours, exposure to tobacco fumes and the risk of respiratory diseases.⁵⁹¹¹ Evidence also exists that the worst forms of child labor are used in the production of maize, rice and sugarcane.⁵⁹¹² These children work long hours, use dangerous tools, are exposed to the elements and pesticides and carry heavy loads. Children in rural areas are three times more likely to work than children in urban areas, and child participation in work is highest in the eastern and central geographical regions.⁵⁹¹³

Many children in Uganda are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor as domestic servants.⁵⁹¹⁴ Child domestic servants in Uganda commonly lack clear terms of service, work long hours with

little or no pay and risk sexual exploitation and physical abuse from their employers.⁵⁹¹⁵

Children in Uganda work in fishing, in which they lack safety equipment and risk death from drowning. These children also receive little or no pay, work long hours processing and smoking fish and risk injuries from burns and fatigue.⁵⁹¹⁶ In the Karamoja region of Uganda, children herd cattle and may fall victim to cattle rustling. They risk being attacked by armed men, are isolated from their communities for a long time, are exposed to extreme weather conditions and are denied access to schooling.⁵⁹¹⁷

Other worst forms of child labor exist in the urban informal sector, in which children work as street vendors selling small items.⁵⁹¹⁸ Children working as street vendors in Uganda endure long hours of hard work for little or no pay, are exposed to physical dangers from vehicles and inclement weather and are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. Some of these children end up as beggars on the streets.⁵⁹¹⁹ Children in Uganda are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor in cross-border trading with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda

and Sudan, performing activities that include the transportation and loading of goods.⁵⁹²⁰

Children reportedly work in the production of charcoal, salt and stone.⁵⁹²¹

Children risk exposure to dangerous activities while working in bars and restaurants.⁵⁹²² Some children as young as age 10 are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.⁵⁹²³ Children in the custody of pimps and brothel owners are usually exposed to pornography and are used to produce pornographic materials.⁵⁹²⁴ Children used to produce pornographic materials in Uganda are often not paid or are robbed of their payments. These children are also exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.⁵⁹²⁵

Uganda is a source and destination country for the trafficking of children.⁵⁹²⁶ Children are trafficked internally for sexual exploitation and forced labor in fishing, agriculture and domestic service.⁵⁹²⁷ Children, specifically from the Karamoja region, are sold at cattle markets.⁵⁹²⁸ Ugandan children are also trafficked to Europe, the Middle East and East African countries for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Children from Burundi, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), India, Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda and Tanzania are trafficked to Uganda for commercial sexual exploitation and agricultural work.⁵⁹²⁹

There were no reports during the year that the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) abducted and conscripted children within Uganda.⁵⁹³⁰ However, there are reports of ongoing abductions by the LRA in the neighboring countries of the DRC and Southern Sudan.⁵⁹³¹

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Uganda has several laws to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. According to the Employment Act, the minimum age for work in Uganda is 14.⁵⁹³² The law states that no child younger than age 18 may

be employed in hazardous work or between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.⁵⁹³³ The Government of Uganda has drafted but not adopted a hazardous child labor list. There are also no laws to protect children working as domestic servants in Uganda.

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

Uganda has free and compulsory primary education until age 12, but the minimum age for work is 14, creating a gap between the minimum ages for compulsory education and work.⁵⁹³⁴ This standard makes children ages 12 to 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor as they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work.

The President of Uganda signed the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2008 in 2010.⁵⁹³⁵ The act prohibits trafficking for the purpose of prostitution and trafficking in children and provides for protection, assistance and support for trafficking victims. The act also provides for reparation for victims of trafficking to and from Uganda.⁵⁹³⁶ The Ugandan Penal Code has not yet been updated to reflect the new law.

The Ugandan Constitution prohibits slavery and forced labor.⁵⁹³⁷ While trafficking in persons is not a specific violation under Ugandan law, related offenses such as abduction and detention of a person for sexual intent, trading in slaves and “defilement”—defined as having sex with a girl younger than age 18—can receive the death penalty.⁵⁹³⁸ Prostitution is illegal in Uganda as is the procurement and pimping of a prostitute. However, laws regarding the procurement and pimping of a prostitute are only applicable to female victims as are laws regarding the defilement of a child.⁵⁹³⁹ This leaves a gap in legislation with male victims being unprotected.

The minimum age for voluntary military service in Uganda is 18, and there is no conscription for the military.⁵⁹⁴⁰

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Government of Uganda has established a child labor steering committee to coordinate child labor issues. The committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MGLSD), the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Agriculture and Health, the National Organization of Trade Unions, the Confederation of Uganda Trade Unions, the Federation of Uganda Employers, the International Rescue Committee, ILO-IPEC and other civil society stakeholders.⁵⁹⁴¹ Inadequate communications and resources have prevented the committee from meeting regularly on child labor issues since January 2010.⁵⁹⁴²

MGLSD is the lead agency on labor issues and is in charge of enforcing all labor laws in Uganda.⁵⁹⁴³ There are two units within MGLSD responsible for children’s issues—the Child Labor Unit (CLU) and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Unit. The OVC Unit guides programming for orphans and other vulnerable children and integrates child labor issues into the OVC database.⁵⁹⁴⁴ The CLU, with two full-time

civil servants, is responsible for the development of the National Child Labor Action Plan. MGLSD has 44 non specialized labor inspectors within Uganda. Inspectors are assigned permanently to 36 of the 112 administrative districts.⁵⁹⁴⁵ During the reporting period, the Government of Uganda published a pamphlet on *Guidelines for Labor Inspectors on the Identification of Hazardous Child Labor* to facilitate the programming, monitoring, development and implementation of public policies to eliminate of the worst forms of child labor.⁵⁹⁴⁶

Although information on the number of inspections carried out in the reporting period are unavailable, most of the inspections took place at formal work places. The Government of Uganda provided training for district labor inspectors.⁵⁹⁴⁷ However, there is no information on the scope or quality of the training. A complaint system for child labor has been established by ILO, in coordination with MGLSD. However, both MGLSD and the Uganda Police Force (UPF) are unable to provide statistics on the number of calls received regarding child labor and trafficking complaints, and there were no reported cases of child labor violations at the national level.⁵⁹⁴⁸ Given the extent of the child labor problem in the country, this may be due to a lack of awareness about the issue or problems with the mechanism for filing complaints.

The UPF within the Ministry of Internal Affairs is the lead agency for enforcing anti-trafficking laws and investigating cases related to trafficking in persons.⁵⁹⁴⁹ The UPF has a Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) that has 340 officers trained on child protection issues at the national, district and local levels.⁵⁹⁵⁰ Some staff members are designated as CFPU liaison officers to handle child-related complaints. These liaison officers receive some specialized training on family and child law from MGLSD.⁵⁹⁵¹ The CFPU reports managing over 31 child labor complaints during the reporting period.⁵⁹⁵² However, its capacity to conduct enforcement efforts and to monitor is

constrained by lack of resources.⁵⁹⁵³ Additionally, the Ministry of Justice and the Directorate for Public Prosecutions is charged with prosecuting trafficking cases.⁵⁹⁵⁴ However, a lack of resources and court backlogs create obstacles to the convictions of traffickers. Along with investigations, the CFPU also provides trainings to local police regarding children's rights and measures to identify and prevent trafficking.⁵⁹⁵⁵ All incoming police officers are required to participate in a 1-day trafficking response course provided by the CPFU.⁵⁹⁵⁶ Research indicates that specialized anti-trafficking training was provided to 150 new law enforcement officials during the reporting period.⁵⁹⁵⁷

There was some prosecution of trafficking crimes, including investigations, some arrests, a pending trial and issuance of a fine during the reporting period. In other cases, however, there is no evidence of sanctions placed on the perpetrators of crimes.⁵⁹⁵⁸ The small number of prosecutions and the issuance of a fine for such a serious crime suggest that insufficient resources and commitment dedicated to the problem.⁵⁹⁵⁹

During the reporting period, the Government also created an inter-ministerial Anti-Sacrifice and Trafficking in Persons Task Force, which is charged with drafting policy and implementing public information campaigns as well as managing and investigating trafficking cases.⁵⁹⁶⁰

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Uganda has developed a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor, with support from ILO-IPEC.⁵⁹⁶¹ In addition, the Government of Uganda cooperates with the UN and its partners regarding implementation of an action plan concerning child soldiers, which follows the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. This action plan aims to raise awareness, release and reintegrate child recruits and enforce laws on children

associated with armed forces.⁵⁹⁶² According to the UN, the Government of Uganda's participation in the action plan to date has been "effective" in ensuring that children are not being recruited into armed forces.⁵⁹⁶³ The UN removed Uganda from the list of countries that actively recruit children into the armed forces as a result of its successful implementation of an action plan to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers.⁵⁹⁶⁴

Child labor concerns have also been mainstreamed into the following national development agendas and key documents—Millennium Development Goals (2015), United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2006-2010) and National Education Development Plan (2004-2015).⁵⁹⁶⁵ Research has not uncovered the extent or degree to which these plans have been implemented.

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

The Government of Uganda has participated in the implementation of programs to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Uganda is participating in a 4-year, \$4.79 million Project of Support for the Preparatory Phase of the Uganda National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor funded by USDOL.⁵⁹⁶⁶ This project aims to withdraw and prevent 8,138 children from exploitative child labor in agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, fishing, domestic work, construction, mining, quarrying and the urban informal sector.⁵⁹⁶⁷

The Government also participates in a 4-year, \$5.5 million project funded by USDOL titled Livelihoods, Education and Protection to End Child Labor (LEAP).⁵⁹⁶⁸ The LEAP project aims to contribute to the prevention and elimination of child labor in Northern Uganda and the Karamoja region through awareness raising and improving access to and the quality of education. The project aims to withdraw and prevent 11,275 children from exploitative labor.⁵⁹⁶⁹

In 2010, the Governments of Uganda, the Central African Republic, the DRC and Southern Sudan continued to coordinate joint military operations to rescue abductees of the LRA.⁵⁹⁷⁰ During the year, the Government of Uganda also took steps to protect and support demobilized LRA child trafficking victims by providing services, such as shelter and education. However, the Government of Uganda efforts to provide services to other types of child trafficking is lacking.⁵⁹⁷¹ Also, with assistance from NGOs, the Government supports returning children who had been abducted by armed forces. Research indicates that these government efforts have been somewhat successful.⁵⁹⁷²

At a regional and policy level, the Government of Uganda participates in the East African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization to strengthen regional cooperation and capacities among East African law enforcement authorities. The project is funded with \$38 million from the UNDOC and funding partners.⁵⁹⁷³ Research indicates that the success of this project has yet to be determined.⁵⁹⁷⁴

Also during the reporting period, the Government of Uganda participated in an anti-trafficking project funded by USDOS for \$500,000 that trained 178 law enforcement officers on identification, prevention and protection of

child trafficking victims.⁵⁹⁷⁵ The Government of Uganda continues awareness-raising activities on trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation through radio, billboards and other programs.⁵⁹⁷⁶

The Government of Uganda supports programs that help Karamojan children by removing them from the streets of Kampala and placing them in shelters, among other support.⁵⁹⁷⁷ The Government continues its support for NGO-run shelters that provide medical care, psychological support and other services to vulnerable children.⁵⁹⁷⁸ During the reporting period, the Government of Uganda also established a hotline for trafficking victims.⁵⁹⁷⁹ However, given the magnitude of the concerns, these efforts were not sufficient to address the problem.

The Government has also partnered with ILO to implement a campaign to stop modern-day slavery. The campaign uses posters, stickers and pamphlets to distribute messages and provides contact information for police reporting and NGO hotlines. However, no calls were received by the police during the reporting period.⁵⁹⁸⁰

Despite using external donor funding for the implementation of these projects, Government-supported efforts still fall short of reaching the large numbers of children in the worst forms of child labor in Uganda.

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

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Adopt a list of hazardous activities for children.
- Update the Penal Code to reflect the Anti-Trafficking Act of 2008.
- Adopt legislation that raises the age for compulsory education to be commensurate with the minimum age for work.
- Amend legislation to expand the definition of the crime of “defilement” to include boys as well as girls.
- Amend the laws to include protection for domestic service work.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Improve the child labor steering committee’s capacity to ensure effective communication and coordination among relevant agencies.
- Take all necessary measures to effectively enforce child labor and trafficking laws, including—
 - Increasing the number of labor inspectors.
 - Increasing training for law enforcement officers, judges and prosecutors.
 - Ensuring that perpetrators of crimes against children are prosecuted and penalized commensurate with the severity of their crimes.

IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS:

- Increase the number of shelters and extend the provision to all children in the worst forms of child labor and child trafficking.
- Expand and improve programs to prevent children’s involvement in exploitative child labor by
 - Working with donors to scale up efforts.
 - Drawing on successful models that have been implemented in existing child labor projects.
 - Implementing projects that target forced child labor and child trafficking, in addition to children affected by war, as well as social programs that address the root causes of trafficking and exploitation of children from the Karamoja region.
- Raise awareness of the worst forms of child labor and enhance hotline mechanisms to ensure that these child labor cases are reported, investigated and tracked.

⁵⁹⁰⁹ Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates*, 2005-2010. Data provided are from 2005-2006. 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. As a result, statistics and information on children’s work in general are reported in this section, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, 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 of this report.

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⁵⁹¹⁴ Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development, *National Action Plan for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labor in Uganda 2011-2015*, Kampala, November 2010.

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⁵⁹²⁵ *Ibid.* See also Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development, *Guidelines for Labor Inspectors on the Identification of Hazardous Child Labor*.

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⁵⁹⁵³ U.S. Embassy- Kampala, reporting, February 25, 2010, para 26f.

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⁵⁹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, para 27a.

⁵⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, para 27f.

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