

In 2011, Sri Lanka made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. It adopted a list of 51 hazardous occupations and/or working conditions prohibited to children. However, research found little evidence of government efforts to prosecute those responsible for violating laws regarding prohibition of the use of child soldiers. The worst forms of child labor continued to exist in manufacturing and dangerous forms of agriculture.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate		100.8

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2011, the Sri Lankan Department of Census and Statistics released the results of the 2008/2009 Child Labor Survey.(3) The survey reports that 1.3 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 11 years and 2.2 percent of children between the ages of 12 and 14 years are involved in child labor. Similarly, the Survey reveals that 0.1 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 11 years and 0.7 percent of children between the ages of 12 and 14 years are involved in hazardous child labor.(4) The survey did not include the former conflict-ridden Northern Province, which accounts for nearly 4.7 percent of the country's population.(4-6) Data from the survey were not released in time for the statistical analysis required for inclusion in the table above.

Children in Sri Lanka are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in manufacturing and dangerous activities in agriculture.(3, 7-9) Children's work in agriculture commonly involves exploitative activities, such as using dangerous machinery and tools, carrying heavy loads and applying harmful pesticides.(10) In manufacturing, children, mostly boys, are exposed to heavy loads, gas and fumes, and sharp tools.(3)



Children are exploited in prostitution in coastal areas as part of sex tourism.(11, 12) Children are also employed in domestic service, a largely unregulated and undocumented sector.(7, 8, 13, 14) Some child domestics are subject to physical, sexual and emotional abuse; there were also reports of rural children in debt bondage in urban households.(8) Children also work as street vendors.(3, 8, 14) Children working on the streets are exposed to a variety of risks, including severe weather, accidents caused by their proximity to automobiles and their vulnerability to criminal elements.(15) Children reportedly work in the mining, fishing, transport and construction manufacturing sectors.(3, 8, 14)

Reports indicate that some children working in agriculture, including those younger than age 12, have been forced to work in the fireworks and fishing industries.(8, 11, 16)

Children are trafficked internally into commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor and domestic service.(7, 11, 12) Children are also trafficked abroad to work as domestic servants, primarily in Middle Eastern countries, where they are vulnerable to labor and sexual exploitation.(11, 16)

Most children in Sri Lanka have access to basic education.(14) However, both the two-decade-long civil conflict and the 2004 tsunami devastated parts of the country, creating major educational disparities in the affected areas.(17, 18) In the former conflict zone of the Northern Province, many children

have returned to schools after years of displacement and violence, but some continue to face difficulties catching up to age appropriate grade level.(19)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act sets the minimum age for employment at 14 and the minimum age for employment in hazardous work at 18.(3, 20, 21) During the reporting period, the Government of Sri Lanka adopted a list of 51 hazardous occupations and/or working conditions prohibited for children.(3) The list contains all of the major occupations and/or working conditions most prevalent in the worst forms of child labor, with the exception of domestic service.(3)

	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	No
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

Children under age 14 may engage in light work in family-run farms or as a part of their technical education, as long as their employment does not prevent them from attending school.(14, 22, 23)

The minimum age for voluntary recruitment in the armed forces is 18; there is no compulsory conscription.(24, 25) The Penal Code criminalizes and prescribes penalties for individuals who engage children younger than age 18 in debt bondage, forced labor, slavery, armed conflict or trafficking.(26) The Penal Code criminalizes and prescribes penalties for engaging children younger than age 18 in pornography and prostitution.(27, 28)

Education in Sri Lanka is compulsory until the age of 15 and free through age 18.(23, 29)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Steering Committee on Child Labor (NSC) coordinates the implementation of the Roadmap for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016, the Government's key mechanism for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.(3, 14) Chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Labor and Labor Relations (MOLRR), the National Steering Committee includes representatives from key government agencies, employer and workers' organizations, the ILO, UNICEF and other NGOs.(3)

The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) is an independent agency under the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs (MCDWA). It shares responsibility with the National Steering Committee for coordinating action to protect children, including the worst forms of child labor.(8, 16) This body's mandate includes formulating policies and enforcing laws on child abuse and exploitation, coordinating groups that combat child abuse and exploitation, and conducting research and mobilizing resources.(3, 30) The NCPA is mandated to assist children who are victims of physical and sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and armed conflict.(30)

During the reporting period, both child victims of sexual exploitation and child labor were provided with shelter and protection by the Department of Probation and Child Care Services.(23)

The Government of Sri Lanka initiated a National Anti-Trafficking Task Force (NTF) in 2010, which is charged with coordinating governmental ministries, departments, law enforcement and civil society anti-trafficking interventions.(19, 31) The NTF also reviews related legislation and recommends legal and policy reforms on the country's response to trafficking in persons. The NTF developed a National Plan of Action on Trafficking in Persons in 2011, under which child trafficking is covered.(19, 31, 32)

The NCPA and the Women and Children's Bureau of the Sri Lankan Police (WCBSLP) are the key agencies responsible for coordinating the efforts to combat child trafficking, forced child labor, commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in illicit activities.(3, 30)

The Department of Labor (DOL)—under the MOLRR—the NCPA's Police Unit and the WCBSLP collaborate on the enforcement of child labor laws.(3, 8) The DOL's labor inspectorate employs 452 labor officers to enforce all labor laws, including those related to child labor.(3) During the reporting period, the DOL conducted 237 child labor-specific inspections, found 13 child labor violations and charged 9 employers.(3) The outcome of the charged employers' cases is still pending. The courts imposed fines in two cases filed in previous years.

During the reporting period, the DOL conducted three 1-day training of trainers courses on the elimination of hazardous child labor for labor officials and for law enforcement officers, including police, probation and labor officers.(3)

The NCPA's Police Unit has 25 officers who focus on criminal investigations of child labor, child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Unit also has additional child protection officers located in the districts.(3) The WCBSLP has branches in 42 police stations throughout the country. In police stations without a WCBSLP, police officers in charge oversee functions of the division.(3, 16) During the reporting period, there was one conviction for the procurement and commercial sexual exploitation of a child for prostitution.(23)

Complaints of violations for child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children can be made via two hotlines, one operated by either the NCPA or the other by WCBSLP.(16) The NCPA received 227 child labor complaints during the reporting period, and 91 child trafficking complaints.(3, 32) The NCPA investigated seven reported cases of child trafficking during 2011. As a result of the investigations, 16 suspects were arrested and two cases were referred to the Attorney General for advice.(32)

The Government of Sri Lanka acknowledges and has committed to investigate allegations of previous recruitment and use of children in armed conflict by non-state armed forces. While some recruiters of child soldiers were killed during the conflict, research has found no evidence of prosecutions and convictions of those who violated the law on children and armed conflict who are still alive.(31, 33-35)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government's child labor policy is the Roadmap to End the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2011-2016). Issued by the MOLRR in 2010, the Roadmap specifies time bound goals, including developing and/or strengthening the management,

coordination, implementation, resource mobilization and reporting on the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.(36) The Roadmap also provides mainstreaming strategies at the district level on specific sectors of child labor, including armed conflict, plantations, fisheries and tourism. In addition, the Roadmap outlines strategies to include child labor issues within social protection and education goals.(36, 37)

The Roadmap's goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labor by 2016 relied heavily on recently released data (2008/2009) from a government survey on child labor that leaves out Northern Sri Lanka.(36) Although child labor rates in the rest of the country were low, the lack of recent child labor data in the North could indicate a need for additional efforts prior to achieving the Roadmap's goal of complete elimination of the worst forms of child labor by 2016.

The Government's 2001-2011 National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking of Children for Exploitative Employment prioritizes four main areas—legal reform and law enforcement; institutional strengthening and research; prevention; and rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of child trafficking victims.(38) The NFT developed a National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in 2011, which relevant government departments implemented.(37)

The Government's national development plan, A Vision for New Sri Lanka (2006-2016), includes policies on combating child labor.(16) Among a number of strategies, this development plan addresses poverty through social safety nets, encourages parents to send their children to school instead of work and enforces legislation on the minimum age for work.(39)

Sri Lanka lacks a policy on the rehabilitation of former child combatants. The Government's 2009 National Framework Proposal for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka included a mechanism to categorize those requiring rehabilitation, including a special plan for children.(10, 15) However, the Framework was never adopted and no other policies on the rehabilitation of former child and adult soldiers have received Government approval.(10)

The National Plan of Action for Children of Sri Lanka (2010-2014) focuses on child protection issues, identifying child labor as a factor that compromises child protection.(32) The National Plan's strategies to reduce child labor include increased punitive action, legal enforcement and capacity building, monitoring, cooperation among stakeholders, and awareness raising.(32)

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent Child Labor

In 2011, the DOL conducted five awareness-raising campaigns on hazardous child labor targeting school children, principals, teachers and parents in five districts.(3) On World Day Against Child Labor, the DOL placed a half-page newspaper announcement with information on the new hazardous child labor regulations.(3) In addition, they supplemented information about hazardous child labor during their labor law awareness-raising programs for female workers in plantations, export processing zones and factories.(3)

The Department of Census and Statistics released the results of a Child Labor Survey, with technical support from the ILO and funding from USDOL, over the reporting period.(3)

The Ministry of Justice and NFT worked on a project funded by the DOS in 2011 on the establishment of community watch groups in 16 locations countrywide, which identified several cases of child trafficking.(19) In addition, the project developed media on safe migration and human trafficking, including a docudrama, a TV commercial and a poster.(19)

The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs collaborated with the ILO Decent Work Program (DWP) on five awareness-raising programs on hazardous forms of child labor for stakeholders.(32)

The Ministry of Economic Development worked closely with USAID on a project to create and improve livelihood and vocational training opportunities for at-risk youth, and to enhance their access to information and education in the East and North regions of the country.(40) In addition, the project created supplementary educational materials and provided services to help out-of-school youth return to formal education.(40)

In 2011, the Joint Plan for Assistance for Northern Province project (JPA), a collaborative effort among the Government of Sri Lanka, UN agencies, and local and international NGOs, provided reintegrated conflict-affected children in Northern Sri Lanka with transitional education services.(1, 4) The JPA also assisted them in returning to school by providing them with items such as school supplies, uniforms and bicycles. Further, the JPA activities included the rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools, the development of community-led school and safety committees and the establishment of temporary learning spaces.(1, 4) In addition, the Government of Sri Lanka runs three rehabilitation centers that have been in operation since 2008 and provide education, care, psychological support and reunification assistance to former child combatants.(23)

The issue of whether these programs have an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Sri Lanka:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Create protections for children engaged in domestic service.	2010, 2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Provide additional funding for the NCPA to adequately carry out investigations on child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2011
	Prosecute individuals who have violated laws related to children's exploitation in the armed conflict.	2009, 2010, 2011
Policies	Conduct a child labor assessment in Northern Sri Lanka and incorporate findings into the Roadmap.	2011
	Create a transparent policy on the rehabilitation of children affected by the armed conflict.	2011
Social Programs	Assess the impact that existing programs may have on child labor	2011

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