

In 2015, Liberia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government continued to redirect resources to address the aftermath of the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak. Thousands of children were orphaned, separated, or unaccompanied as a result of the outbreak. In March, the Government reopened schools after a six month closure, and in May, the World Health Organization declared the country Ebola free. Subsequently, in June, the Government passed the Decent Work Bill, which contained a list of hazardous work prohibited for children. However, children in Liberia are engaged in child labor, including in the production of rubber and mining diamonds, and in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work. The Liberia National Police's Women and Children Protection Section continue to lack sufficient resources to conduct investigations and enforce child labor laws.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Liberia are engaged in child labor, including in the production of rubber and mining diamonds.(1, 2) Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work.(3, 4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Liberia.

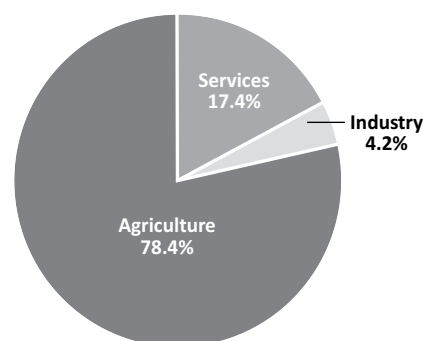
**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	16.6 (136,340)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	75.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	14.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		58.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2014, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(5)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Labor Force Survey, 2010.(6)

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

**Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of rubber (2, 7, 8)
	Production of charcoal* (7)
	Farming activities,* including production of cocoa,* coffee,* and cassava* (7, 9-11)
Industry	Mining for diamonds‡ and gold*‡ (1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 12)
	Cutting* and crushing stone (2, 4, 8, 10, 13-15)
	Construction, activities unknown (2, 4)
Services	Domestic work* (4, 13, 14)
	Street work, including vending,* begging,* hawking goods,* and carrying heavy loads* (2, 7, 8, 13, 16-18)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs* (4, 19)
	Forced labor in domestic work, street vending, farming, mining, begging, and work on rubber plantations each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3, 4, 19)
	Commercial sexual exploitation* sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (20)

\* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)-(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Children are trafficked within Liberia for commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, forced begging, and forced labor in street vending, alluvial diamond mines, and on rubber plantations. Children are also trafficked from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.(2, 3) Children in rural communities, like Margibi, engage in rubber tapping and coal burning activities. In contrast, children in urban cities, particularly Monrovia and the surrounding communities in Montserrado County, crush rocks near construction sites as a form of livelihood.(15)




According to the Children's Law, primary education is free. However, in practice, many schools charge fees, which may prevent some children from attending school.(7) The limited number of schools in some areas also impedes access to education. In addition, sources indicate that girls may face barriers to accessing education due to sexual abuse by male teachers in schools. (11, 21, 22) All of these obstacles increase the risk of children engaging in the worst forms of child labor.(23, 24) Liberian parents are required by law to register their infants within 14 days of birth.(25) However, fewer than 5 percent of births are registered. Unable to prove their citizenship, non-registered children may have difficulty addressing citizenship and nationality questions, which makes them vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.(26, 27)

In 2015, the Government continued to focus its resources on addressing an outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease, which may have impacted its ability to address the worst forms of child labor. The outbreak left thousands of children orphaned, separated, or unaccompanied, which makes them vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.(2, 28) In March 2015, the Government reopened schools after a 6-month closure due to the Ebola outbreak. Teachers prepared themselves by carrying thermometers to test students' temperatures and brought chlorinated water for the students to wash their hands.(29, 30) In May 2015, the WHO declared Liberia Ebola free.(31)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Liberia has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor**

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 74 of the Labor Law (14, 32)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 7, Section 9.1 of the Children's Law (13, 33)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Article 21.4 of the Decent Work Act (2, 34)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 12 of the Constitution; Article 2.2 of the Decent Work Act; Article 7, Section 8 of the Children's Law; Article 1 and Section 5 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (13, 33-36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 7, Section 8 of the Children's Law; Article 1 and Section 5 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (33, 36)

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)**

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 3, Section 21 of the Children's Law; Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Article 1 and Section 5 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (33, 34, 36)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Chapter 16 of the Penal Law (34, 37)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (33, 38)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act (10, 33, 39)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law (33)

\* No conscription (38)

In June 2015, the Government passed the Decent Work Act, which prohibits hazardous work for children under age 18. Section 21.4 of the Decent Work Act prohibits the use of children in work underground and under water, as well as work involving dangerous machines, carrying heavy loads, and exposure to hazardous substances, temperatures, noise levels, and vibrations.(34). Although Section 74 of the Labor Law prohibits employment of children under age 16, it minimally penalizes offenders with a fine of \$1.18 USD (100 Liberian dollars).(32)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor (MOL)	Enforce labor laws and refer suspected child labor cases to the National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL) for investigation. (2, 10) Conduct child labor investigations. Determine validity of child labor allegations and refer cases for further investigation to the Liberia National Police's Women and Children Protection Section (WCPS).(10)
WCPS	Enforce laws relating to violations involving the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking.(40)
Liberia National Police's Anti-Trafficking Unit	Ensure human trafficking training is integrated into police orientation to train officers on the enforcement of anti-human trafficking laws.(27)
Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization	Enforce human trafficking laws in international cases.(10)
Liberian Transnational Crime Unit	Coordinate responses to international organized crime, including monitoring and prosecuting criminal violations involving the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking.(41)

#### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2015, labor law enforcement agencies in Liberia took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (42)	\$1.8 million± (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	39 (42)	39 (2)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (42)	No (2)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown (42)	N/A (2)
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown (42)	N/A (2)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (42)	Yes (2)

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**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (cont)**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Number of Labor Inspections	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
■ Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (42)	0 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (42)	N/A (2)
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	N/A (42)	N/A (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (42)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (42)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (42)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (42)	Yes (2)

‡ Data are from the Government of Liberia for the period from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2016.

In 2015, the Ministry of Labor (MOL) employed 54 officials to work on labor issues, consisting of 1 inspector general, 14 labor commissioners, and 39 labor inspectors. Labor inspectors conducted unannounced inspections of construction companies and private businesses.(2) The MOL does not have any labor inspectors dedicated solely to child labor issues and refers suspected child labor cases to the National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL). The NACOMAL has the primary responsibility of conducting child labor investigations yet has no child labor investigators of its own. In addition, NACOMAL has a limited budget and limited staff. (2) NACOMAL's child labor investigations are carried out with the assistance of the MOL, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, LNP, or WCPS and the three NACOMAL staff members that include the Director, Assistant Director, and the Filing Clerk. (2, 43) During the year, the MOL, in collaboration with Winrock International's Actions to Reduce Child Labor in Areas of Rubber Production Project, conducted a 5-day "Training of Trainers" for the National Steering Committee on Child Labor. The workshop focused on building the capacity of labor commissioners and inspectors to address child labor violations.(2, 44, 45)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

In 2015, criminal law enforcement agencies in Liberia took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Training for Investigators		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (42)	Yes (2)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
Number of Violations Found	0 (42)	0 (2)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (42)	Unknown (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (42)	Yes (2)

The Liberia National Police's (LNP) Women and Children Protection Section reported having limited resources to conduct investigations, including a lack of vehicles, fuel, sufficient training, finances, communications equipment, and investigative equipment.(2, 46) The LNP refers child endangerment cases for prosecution to the Ministry of Justice. The data for child endangerment cases prosecuted through the Ministry of Justice are not disaggregated to determine the number involving child labor violations.(2) In 2015, the LNP referred 22 child endangerment cases for prosecution, but details about each case are limited. In addition, the LNP reported that enforcement efforts on child labor violations are still inadequate, despite employing 192 Women and Children Protection Section officers to investigate allegations of abuse against women and children.(2) During the year, the LNP had trainings that supported the drafting of the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.(2)

#### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

**Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
NACOMAL	Monitor child labor issues and develop child labor policies. Led by the MOL and comprised of representatives from 16 organizations, including NGOs and international and civil society organizations. (47) Objectives include reforming national child labor laws and creating a national child labor database to assist with conducting surveys to determine the magnitude of the child labor issue in the country.(47)
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Advocate for eliminating child labor, especially its worst forms. Chaired by the MOL and comprised of government officials and workers' organizations.(2) Includes four subcommittees on resource mobilization, advocacy, training and legal development, and monitoring and evaluation. Met quarterly during the reporting period.(42, 43) During the reporting period, the NSC conducted two trainings. The first training was sponsored by the ILO and focused on developing goals for the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor.(43) The first training included the following participants: Ministry of Internal Affairs, UNICEF, Ministry of Education, WCPS, Ministry of Lands Mines and Energy, Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Liberia Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Child Fund Liberia, Winrock, Liberian Children Representative Forum, and the Liberia Labor Congress. The second training focused on the NSC's mandate and discussions involved topics on child labor-related concepts and definitions on child labor. (43)The second training included the 38 members of the NSC.(43)
Child Protection Network	Coordinate child protection efforts through monthly meetings to discuss child protection issues, including child labor and human trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development, and comprised of the MOL, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the WCPS, civil society organizations, and several NGOs.(4) Also responsible for coordinating referrals of child victims of abuse to social services providers, with support from international and national organizations.(10, 14) Met on a monthly basis in 2015.(2)
Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force	Coordinate anti-human trafficking activities. Chaired by the MOL and includes the Commissioner of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization; the Liberia National Police; and representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Internal Affairs.(40) Trained 160 law enforcement and community leaders on identifying victims of human trafficking and their perpetrators in 2015.(3)

#### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Liberia has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

**Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Action Plan for Trafficking in Persons	Outlines the Government's anti-human trafficking efforts, including for child victims.(10)
Direct Assistance and Support to Trafficked Victims Standard Operation Procedures	Establishes roles and responsibilities for coordinating government assistance to human trafficking victims.(27)
National Social Welfare Policy	Prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that target children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.(48)
National Employment Policy*	Aims to provide vocational training for youth.(49)
Rubber Industry Master Plan (2010–2040)*	Prioritizes the development of the rubber industry and includes provisions for improving workers' standard of living and access to credit, as well as children's access to education.(50)
Education Sector Plan (2010–2020)*	Aims to improve the education infrastructure, as well as the access to, and quality of, primary education.(51)
2030 Vision Policy (2012–2017)*	Outlines the Government of Liberia's goal to become a middle-income country by 2030 by increasing focus on education and livelihoods.(52)
Revised National Youth Policy (2012–2017)*	Outlines the Government of Liberia's National Youth Policy, which includes employment and education components.(53–55)
National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan (2015–2020)*	Outlines strategy to prevent new HIV/AIDS infections in youth by promoting the use of condoms and providing HIV/AIDS counseling. The plan also targets vulnerable populations, including out-of-school youth.(56)

\* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

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During 2015, the Government did not renew child labor related policies, including the National Strategy for Child Survival, which aimed to improve the literacy rate of youth, and the National Health Policy, which sought to improve the health care delivery system in the country.(57, 58)

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Liberia participated in programs that may contribute to the prevention or elimination of child labor (Table 10).

**Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaign†	Government of Liberia MOL program that uses radio and billboard messages to raise public awareness on human trafficking.(11, 27)
Liberia Agriculture Investment Program	\$175 million, multi-donor program that aims to enhance household livelihoods in the agriculture sector by building linkages with markets and improving rural infrastructure, which may have a positive effect on reducing child labor.(59)
Actions to Reduce Child Labor in Areas of Rubber Production (2012–2016)	\$6.2 million, USDOL-funded, 4-year project implemented by Winrock International to combat child labor in the rubber sector. Aims to withdraw or prevent 10,100 children from engaging in the worst forms of child labor by providing education, as well as livelihoods support to 3,700 vulnerable families. Implemented in collaboration with local rubber companies.(60) In 2015, the project enrolled 1,096 students in the Accelerated Learning Program, provided School Success Kits to 5,539 children, and trained child labor monitoring committee members on the dangers and effects of child labor, in 2015. During the Ebola outbreak, enrolled 230 students into the Model Farm School Program.(61)
Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues (2011–2017)	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries to support the priorities of the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016, established by The Hague Global Child Labor Conference in 2010. Aims to build the capacity of the national government and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor and forced labor in Liberia.(62) In 2015, worked on developing the National Action Plan on Child Labor by holding several meetings with a group of government officials as well as an ILO national consultant. Government officials involved with a group included the MOL; the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy; the Liberia Labor Congress; the Liberia Chamber of Commerce; UNICEF; Winrock ; and the ILO.(63)
Social Cash Transfer Program	EU-funded program that provides regular payments to poor and “labor constrained” households (households in which the majority of household members are unable to work for reasons such as disability) in Bomi County, along with other counties.(64) Targets 5,000 households, and each beneficiary household receives between \$10 and \$25 per month.(64)
Fast Track Initiative Grant for Basic Education	\$40 million, World Bank-funded project that aims to improve primary education access and quality.(65)\$40 million, World Bank-funded project that aims to improve primary education access and quality.(65)
Feed the Future Project (2011–2015)	\$75 million, USAID-funded project that aims to improve food security and nutrition among vulnerable populations.(66, 67)
Girls’ Opportunities to Access Learning Program	Funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s Threshold Grant and led by USAID; focuses on increasing girls’ enrollment, attendance, and retention in primary schools in Bong, Grand Bassa, and Lofa counties.(68)
Youth and Workforce Development (Advancing Youth Project)	USAID-funded program that builds the capacity of the Ministry of Education and NGOs to address the needs of out-of-school youth by providing access to alternative basic education and providing sustainable livelihood opportunities.(68)
Refugee Camps and Services (2012–2015)	\$42.5 million, UNHCR-funded project that maintains refugee camps and provides essential services to Ivorian refugees, including children.(69, 70)\$42.5 million, UN High Commissioner for Refugees-funded project that maintains refugee camps and provides essential services to Ivorian refugees, including children.(69, 70) There are currently 3 refugee camps with an estimated 21,000 refugees receiving assistance.(43)

† Program is funded by the Government of Liberia.

Although Liberia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.

### VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Liberia (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2015
	Ensure that penalties for violating the employment minimum age requirements are sufficient to deter child labor violations.	2014 – 2015
Enforcement	Make information publicly available on the number of labor inspections conducted and whether inspections targeted relevant sectors in which there is evidence of labor violations.	2010 – 2015
	Make information publicly available on whether criminal law enforcement officers received trainings, and publish data on the number of investigations, violations, prosecutions, and convictions.	2015
	Fully fund child labor enforcement mechanisms and prosecution efforts, such as the MOL, the WCPS, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, and provide necessary training for such officials to enforce child labor laws.	2010 – 2015
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing health, education, and youth policies.	2010 – 2015
	Renew or develop policies that improve youth literacy rates, and that improve the health care delivery system, such as the National Strategy for Child Survival and the National Health Policy.	2015
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in farming and construction to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2015
	Improve access to education by building additional schools, ensuring children are registered at birth, addressing sexual abuse in schools, and subsidizing the cost of school fees.	2012 – 2015
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem.	2009 – 2015

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