

In 2017, Kiribati made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established a mechanism for receiving labor complaints, including child labor complaints. However, although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Kiribati perform dangerous tasks in construction and street vending. Existing laws do not identify hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children, and the government has not adopted a national policy to combat the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Kiribati perform dangerous tasks in construction and street vending. (1) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Kiribati. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		99.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (2) Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2018. (3)

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	Cutting toddy palm trees for toddy (1)
	Fishing and harvesting clams (1)
Industry	Construction, portering, and seafaring (1; 4)
Services	Street vending and working in kava bars (1; 4)
	Domestic work (4)

In Kiribati, education is free and compulsory for all children until age 16. However, children face barriers to accessing education due to associated costs and the lack of schools in remote areas. (1; 4; 5)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Kiribati has ratified all 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	✓

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor (cont)

Convention	Ratification
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Kiribati's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children and the prohibition of child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 115 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (6)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 117 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (6)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 244 and 249 of the Penal Code; Sections 118(1)(a, c, d) and 122 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code; Section 6(1-3) of the Constitution of Kiribati (6; 7; 8)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Section 43 of the Measures to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act; Section 118(1)(b) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (6; 9)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 136 and 141–142 of the Penal Code; Sections 118(1)(f) and 118(1)(g) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (6; 7)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 142 of the Penal Code; Sections 118(1)(h) and 118(1)(i) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (6; 7)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A†		
State Voluntary	N/A†		
Non-state	Yes	18	Sections 118(1)(e) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (6)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 7 of the Education Act (10)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 11 of the Education Act (10)

† No standing military (11)

Kiribati has not identified by national law or regulations the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. Under article 116 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Code, the laws do not specify the activities and hours of work per week that are acceptable for children engaged in light work, or the conditions under which light work can be undertaken. (6) Kiribati's laws prohibiting child trafficking are insufficient because they do not specifically prohibit trafficking children domestically. (6; 9)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources Development (MLHRD) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Human Resources Development	Enforce labor laws, including those related to child labor. (12)
Kiribati Police Force	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Investigate cases of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children through a special Domestic Violence and Sexual Offenses Unit. (13)

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)

Organization/Agency	Role
Child Protection Officer, Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs (MWYSA)	Remove children from harmful situations, including as a result of sexual exploitation and harsh or exploitative labor. (12; 14)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Kiribati took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MLHRD that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including labor inspector training.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (15)	\$5,360 (16)
Number of Labor Inspectors	7 (12)	8 (16)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown (15)	Yes (16)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown (15)	No (16)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (17)	N/A (16)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (15)	No (16)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (15)	144 (16)
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown (15)	144 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (15)	0 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown (15)	0 (16)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	Unknown (15)	0 (16)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (15)	Yes (16)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (15)	No (16)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Unknown (15)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (15)	Yes (16)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (12)	Yes (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (15)	Yes (16)

In 2017, the MLHRD established a mechanism for labor complaints, including child labor complaints. The MLHRD increased the funding of the Labor Inspectorate to cover transportation costs, awareness promotion, uniforms, and safety equipment. (16) The MLHRD has eight labor inspectors, seven of whom are based in the capital city, Tarawa, and one based on Kiritimati Island.

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Kiribati took actions to combat child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown (15)	Unknown (16)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (15)	Unknown (16)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (15)	Unknown (16)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (15)	Unknown (16)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (15)	Unknown (16)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (15)	Unknown (16)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (15)	Unknown (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (16)

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IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 8). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor.

Table 8. Key Policies Related to Child Labor[‡]

Policy	Description
Children, Young People, and Families Welfare System Policy	Focuses on strengthening the welfare system, in part, by implementing services to prevent the abuse, violence, neglect, and exploitation of children and young people, including in hazardous labor. During the reporting period, conducted training sessions for welfare officers and outreach programs on counseling and parenting, provided to improve parent, caregiver, and community skills to create an environment that protects children from violence, abuse, and exploitation. (18)

[‡] The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (19; 20)

The government has adopted the Children, Young People, and Families Welfare System Policy; however, research found no evidence of a policy that focuses on combating the worst forms of child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 9). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including programs addressing the problem in all sectors.

Table 9. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Safenet [†]	MWYSA-coordinated program that allows government, churches, and NGOs to provide assistance to victims found in exploitative and violent situations. (12; 16)
Hotlines [†]	MWYSA and police-supported 24-hour hotline for children to report violations, request information, or obtain access to services. (13; 16) Domestic Violence and Sexual Offenses unit operates two 24-hour phone-line services for reporting exploitation and abuse. (21)

[†] Program is funded by the Government of Kiribati.

The ILO-supported Pacific Sub-Regional Child Labor and Trafficking Program ended in March 2017. (16; 22) Although the government has implemented Safenet and Hotlines programs to assist children in exploitative and abusive situations, research found no evidence that the government has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children who are working in construction and street vending.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Kiribati (Table 10).

Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2011 – 2017
	Ensure that the law specifies the activities and number of hours of work per week that are acceptable for children engaged in light work, as well as the conditions under which children can engage in light work.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure that the law specifically prohibits the trafficking of children domestically.	2015 – 2017
Enforcement	Collect and publish data on the enforcement of criminal laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor, including the number of investigations performed, investigations performed, prosecutions initiated, and convictions completed.	2012 – 2017
	Institutionalize training for labor inspectors, including training new labor inspectors and providing refresher courses.	2017

Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2017
Coordination	Establish a mechanism to coordinate the government's efforts to combat child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2017
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant forms of child labor, such as dangerous work in construction and street vending.	2014 – 2017
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education and make education accessible for all children by alleviating school fees and increasing access to schools in remote locations.	2014 – 2017
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017
	Implement social programs to address all relevant forms of child labor, including in construction and street vending.	2017

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