

In 2018, Djibouti made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the year, the Djibouti National Police created a sub-unit to investigate child begging and forced child begging. In addition, the Anti-Trafficking Working Group improved coordination among government agencies, which resulted in more holistic protective services and investigations of potential human trafficking cases, including of children. However, children in Djibouti engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work. Law enforcement efforts are inadequate to prevent and combat child labor, in part because the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of the labor force and they lack the authority to assess penalties. The government did not make adequate efforts to enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor due to lack of financial and human resource allocation and reporting mechanisms. In addition, overall coordination is lacking in efforts to address all forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Djibouti engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1,2) Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work. (1,3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Djibouti. 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	12.3 (23,693)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	67.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	10.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		60.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3, 2006. (5)

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	Caring for livestock, mostly goats (6,7)
Services	Domestic work† (3)
	Street work, such as shining shoes, washing and guarding cars, cleaning storefronts, sorting merchandise, collecting garbage, begging, and selling items, including <i>khat</i> (1,3,6)
	Working in restaurants, small shops, and family businesses (3,6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3,8)
	Forced domestic work and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,3)
	Use in illicit activities, including the selling of marijuana and recreational drugs (7)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

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

Limited reports from prior reporting periods suggested that children, including undocumented migrant girls, have historically been vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation in Djibouti City and the Ethiopia-Djibouti trucking corridor. (8,9) Prior reporting also found that poverty among Djiboutian households made girls vulnerable to

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commercial sexual exploitation. (6) Although primary and middle schools are tuition-free, other school-related expenses may prevent children from attending school. (10-12) Enrollment rates are lower for girls and for all children living in rural or impoverished areas, making these children more vulnerable to child labor. (12,13)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Djibouti 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	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Djibouti's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Article 5 of the Labor Code (14)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 108 and 110 of the Labor Code (14)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 110 of the Labor Code (14)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 290 of the Labor Code; Article 23 of the Law Regarding Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes (14,15)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 1 of the Law on the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons and the Illegal Smuggling of Migrants; Article 23 of the Law Regarding Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes (15,16)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 462–463 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 8 of the Law on the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons and the Illegal Smuggling of Migrants (16,17)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 355–356 and 461 of the Penal Code (17)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 1 of the National Army Amendment Decree (18)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 149–151 and 461 of the Penal Code (17)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 4 of the Law on the Orientation of the Education System (19)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 16 of the Law on the Orientation of the Education System (19)

* No conscription (20)

The Labor Code's minimum age provisions do not apply to children working outside of a formal employment contract. (17,21,22) The Labor Code applies only to children who perform work under a formal employment agreement, which does not conform to international standards requiring that all children be protected under the law establishing a minimum age for work. In addition, although the Labor Code prohibits the employment of children between the ages of 16 and 18 in domestic work, hotels, and bars, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not include street work, an area in which there is evidence of work in an unhealthy environment. (17,22,23)

The law does not specifically criminalize the offering of a child for prostitution, the production of pornography, pornographic performances, or the use of a child for prostitution. (16,17)

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 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 (MOL)	Enforces all labor laws, including child labor laws and regulations. (3) Through its Inspectorate of Labor and Social Laws, regulates youth employment. (21)
Djibouti National Police (DNP), including the Vice Squad	Enforce criminal laws and investigate crimes related to child labor. (3)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes child labor cases referred by the MOL. (3)
National Commission on Human Rights	Receives complaints and investigates cases of human rights violations, including child labor. (3,24) Assists victims in obtaining legal aid to prosecute violators. (24)

In February 2018, Djibouti's National Police Chief created a sub-unit to investigate child begging and forced child begging. (2) Research has not determined the extent of the sub-unit's operations since its creation.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Djibouti took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10)	\$296,380 (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (10)	5 (3)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (25)	No (3)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (10)	Yes (26)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (10)	No (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (10)	No (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (10)	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (10)	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (25)	Yes (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (10)	Yes (3)

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The government does not publish information on its training of labor inspectors, the number of labor inspections conducted, or the number of child labor violations. (3,26)

Labor inspections are not routinely scheduled; they are carried out in reaction to repeated or serious complaints, and only in the formal business sector. The government's policy inhibits the identification of child labor cases in the informal business sector. (3) Documented child labor violations, such as cleaning shoes, begging, washing cars, domestic work, working in small shops, selling items on the street, transporting loads, and working in family-owned businesses, occurred primarily in the informal sector. Although a mechanism for filing and responding to labor complaints exists, reports reflect a lack of efficiency and transparency. (3) Enforcement of child labor laws remains challenging due to insufficient funding and size of labor inspectorate. (3)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Djibouti's workforce, which includes more than 294,000 workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, Djibouti would employ roughly 7 labor inspectors. (27-29)

Criminal Law Enforcement

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

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (9)	Unknown (3)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (10)	Yes (3,26)

The government does not publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts. (3)

The Djibouti National Police (DNP) depends on the IOM to refer cases for prosecution. (22) Although the DNP can legally refer cases of child labor violations for prosecution, it lacks sufficient resources to do so, and therefore relies on international organizations, such as the IOM, to fulfill this role. (7)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efforts to address all forms of child labor outside the scope of human trafficking.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Anti-Trafficking Working Group	Coordinates efforts to combat human trafficking through the development of a collaboration and outreach strategy focusing on the operationalization of the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (2014–2020). The inter-agency working group is led by the Ministry of Justice, and includes representatives from the MOL and the Ministry of the Interior. (1,30) In 2018, under the newly appointed National Coordinator for anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling efforts, the group met monthly, resulting in improved coordination among government agencies. (1)

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (Cont.)

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Council for Children	Promotes children's rights. Led by the Prime Minister and includes eight other agencies, representatives from NGOs, the private sector, and elected officials. (31) Advocates for (1) newborn refugees and migrants to receive birth certificates; (2) education under governmental programs for refugees and asylum seekers; and (3) family reunification for unaccompanied migrant minors. (7) In 2018, the National Council for Children introduced a program targeting children vulnerable to Anti-Human Trafficking and child labor, resulting in a temporary shelter for street children. (32)

Since the government established the Anti-Trafficking Working Group, regular meetings have improved coordination among government agencies, resulted in more holistic protective services for victims, and increased the number of investigations and prosecutions of potential human trafficking cases. (1) Although the government has established an Anti-Trafficking Working Group, research found no evidence that the government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address other forms of child labor.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (2014–2020)	Aims to strengthen the legislative framework to combat human trafficking, protect and assist human trafficking victims, and establish a national referral mechanism between law enforcement officials and social services providers. (33) Although the anti-trafficking working group met monthly during the year, the plan is not yet fully operational. (1)
UNDAF (2018–2022)	Focuses primarily on programs that build capacity for victim recognition and protection, and assists the government in the development of its “Vision 2035” plan. It was extended in 2018 and is in its early implementation phase and has not yet produced substantive results. (26)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In 2018, and for the third consecutive year, the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons is not yet fully operational, although the working group has improved coordination during this reporting period. (1) Research was unable to determine whether the government strengthened the legislative framework, nor are there details available regarding the new Reciprocal Referral Mechanism. This year, the Government of Djibouti provided training on judiciary apparatuses and law enforcement, specifically as it pertains to victim protection. (1,26)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Strengthening the National Criminal Justice System's Response to Trafficking in Persons in partnership with the Government of Djibouti	\$500,000 USDOS-funded program implemented by UNODC, in partnership with the government, that establishes a national referral mechanism for victims of human trafficking and a mechanism for data collection; raises awareness of human trafficking; and conducts law enforcement trainings. (3) In early 2018, the program concluded after it designed and implemented a process to broaden communication among the government, civil society, NGOs, and UN organizations. (7)
National Family Solidarity Program†	Government-funded program implemented by the State Secretariat for National Solidarity that establishes cash transfers to support Djiboutian households in extreme poverty. (34) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Family Solidarity Program during the reporting period.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description
UNICEF-funded Projects	In collaboration with the Government of Djibouti through the National Office for Assistance to Refugees and Affected Populations, the Humanitarian Action for Children Project, and the UNICEF Country Program, promote access to quality education for children, especially from rural and poor urban areas; increase birth registration; and provide support for orphans and vulnerable children. (3,35,36) In 2018, UNICEF provided child protection services to more than 3,000 vulnerable children, including children living on the streets. (12) UNICEF also enrolled an estimated 4,500 refugee and migrant children in the Read, Write and Count Education Program; assisted 4,600 children with access to pre-primary, primary, and secondary education; and coordinated the Refugee Response Plan. (12)
World Bank-funded Programs	Enhancing Income Opportunities in DJ (2015–2019) project aims to provide at least 3,000 youth with basic life skills training, coaching in business plan development, and access to finance. The Access to Quality Education Project (2014–2018), a Global Partnership for Education-funded program, sought to improve the learning environment, construct classrooms, rehabilitate and extend schools in rural areas, train teachers, and procure student learning materials. (13,37,38)
WFP's-Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018-2019)	WFP's Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan for Djibouti maintains humanitarian assistance while focusing on strategies for programming social protection, human capital development, and resilience. (39,40) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Strategic Plan during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Djibouti.

‡ The government had other programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (20,25,41)

On World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, the Ministry of Justice and the German Corporation for International Cooperation organized a 3-day seminar to raise awareness of human trafficking among rural populations. The training portion of the seminar focused on detection and follow up care of victims, and culminated in a series of recommendations to the Ministry of Justice to improve anti-trafficking coordination. (2)

Although the Government of Djibouti has implemented programs that target migrant children, research found no evidence of programs to assist children involved in domestic work, street work, and commercial sexual exploitation. (22) There are no official government-run shelters to assist child victims. The government has authorized NGOs to host migrant street children and orphans overnight, but does not provide support or services to assist in these efforts. (2,7)

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 Djibouti (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive.	2009 – 2018
	Ensure that all children are afforded minimum age for work protections under the law, including children working outside formal employment relationships.	2015 – 2018
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use and offering of a child for commercial sexual exploitation, production of pornography, and pornographic performances.	2012 – 2018
Enforcement	Publish data related to labor law and criminal law enforcement efforts related to child labor.	2010 – 2018
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by allowing the assessment of penalties.	2015 – 2018
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate targets and conducts routine labor inspections in all relevant sectors, including informal businesses.	2017 – 2018
	Ensure that the funding of the labor inspectorate and number of labor inspectors is sufficient to enforce child labor laws.	2018
	Ensure that the complaint mechanism is efficient and transparent.	2018
	Provide the necessary resources for the Djibouti National Police to make referrals for the prosecution of child labor-related violations.	2017 – 2018
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet ILO's technical advice.	2018
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor.	2009 – 2018

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Implement the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons by taking concrete steps to combat child trafficking.	2017 – 2018
	Undertake activities to implement the UNDAF.	2016 – 2018
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children in rural areas, including girls, by removing school-related expenses.	2015 – 2018
	Implement the National Family Solidarity Program.	2018
	Ensure that the World Food Program Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan implementation is supported by government collaboration.	2018
	Implement programs to specifically address children involved in domestic work, street work, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2018
	Establish official government-run shelters to assist child victims.	2018

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