

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED POLICY AND PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2018, Mauritania made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the year, the government approved a new General Child Protection Code that expanded the number of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children, increased penalties to deter violations, and established birth registration as a right and duty. The government also established National Council for Child Protection and allocated a budget of \$100,000 to manage social centers for vulnerable children, including talibés. Despite these new initiatives to address child labor, Mauritania is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because it continued to implement a practice and policy that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, criminal law enforcement authorities did not make adequate efforts to combat slavery and its vestiges.



Specifically, the government did not adequately prosecute or secure convictions in slavery cases, and reports continue to indicate that some government actors, including police and judicial authorities, are unwilling to pursue such cases. In addition, since 2011, the government has required proof of marriage and biological parents' citizenship for children to obtain a birth certificate. As a result, children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including those of slave descent, have been prevented from being registered at birth. Because birth certificates are required for enrollment in secondary school in Mauritania, children as young as age 12 cannot access education, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Children in Mauritania engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in herding cattle and goats. The government did not make sufficient efforts to raise awareness of laws that prohibit slavery and enforce some laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including on hereditary slavery and forced begging. In addition, lack of financial resources severely limited the relevant government agencies' ability to fully implement policies, and social programs to combat the worst forms of child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritania engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery. (1,2-5) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in herding cattle and goats. (1,7-9) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritania. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Working (% and population) | 5 to 14 | 19.7 (Unavailable) |
| Attending School (%) | 5 to 14 | 68.3 |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7 to 14 | 15.8 |
| Primary Completion Rate (%) | | 68.2 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (10)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2015. (11)

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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 | Herding and caring for cattle, camels, goats, and sheep (1,7-9,12-14) |
| | Fishing, catching shrimp and fish (1,8,9,13,14) |
| Industry | Crushing gravel (14,15) |
| Services | Domestic work (1,7-9,16,17) |
| | Working as car mechanics, painters, and carpenters (1,8,9,13) |
| | Garbage scavenging (1,9,13) |
| | Street work, including vending, shoe shining, begging, [†] and in the transportation sector (1,8,9,13,14) |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡] | Forced begging as a result of criminal gang recruitment and coercion by Koranic teachers (1,6,8,17,18) |
| | Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,9,5) |
| | Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (6,9,13) |
| | Indentured and hereditary slavery (1,2-12,16,18-20) |
| | Forced labor in domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,8,13,5) |

[†] 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.

Children in Mauritania, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, continue to be exploited as slaves and endure slave-like practices, particularly in rural and remote areas of the country. Some children are born into slavery; others are born free but remain in a dependent status and are forced to work with their parents for their former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. (4,6,8,9,19-22) Child slaves herd animals, such as cattle and goats; perform domestic labor; and are often sexually exploited. (4,6,15,16,23)

In Mauritania, it is a traditional practice to send children to Koranic teachers to receive an education. However, some Koranic teachers (*marabouts*) force their students (*talibés*) to beg on the streets for long hours and to surrender the money they have earned. (6,7-9,18)

Since 2011, the Government of Mauritania has required proof of marriage and biological parents’ citizenship to obtain a birth certificate. (24,25) As a result, children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including from families of slave descent, have been prevented from being registered at birth. Because birth certificates are required to enroll in secondary school in Mauritania, many children as young as age 12 cannot access education, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (12,9,13,18,21,22,25-27) There are also reports that the civil registration process is confusing and time-consuming. Moreover, applicants have faced additional hardship due to the closure of registration centers outside the capital and staff’s lack of training. (25,28)

In June 2018, the President of Mauritania called on registration centers to streamline procedures to acquire the legal documents necessary for children to access schools. In addition, the General Child Protection Code, enacted in the same month, establishes the right to birth registration. (29-31) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family and the National Agency for Register of Population and Securities (ANRPTS) reached an agreement to facilitate the registration of children without birth certificates. The government compiled a preliminary list of 30,000 unregistered children; their registration is expected to begin in 2019. (32,33) During the reporting period, the ANRPTS also aired messages through national radio and television channels to encourage the population to obtain registration documents. (33)

Ministry of Education officials report that an April 2016 decree requiring all children ages 10 and older to have a national identity card to take part in national examinations has not been applied systematically. The decree has not been withdrawn, and this continues to leave room for different interpretations. (33) In addition, the lack of school infrastructure and limited availability of teachers, especially in rural areas, impede access to education, which may increase children’s vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (19,34-36) Children from families of

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slave descent, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, also face barriers to accessing education due to ethnic discrimination. (12,7,20,21,37)

In 2018, Mauritania hosted approximately 57,000 Malian refugees. (38) During the reporting period, the Government of Mauritania, in collaboration with the UNHCR, began to issue birth certificates to approximately 7,600 Malian refugee children. (32,38,39) Refugee children may have difficulty accessing education, which makes them particularly vulnerable to engaging in the worst forms of child labor, including being recruited by non-state armed groups. (6,13,27,40,41)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mauritania has ratified most 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 Mauritania's legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor, including the identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

| Standard | Meets International Standards | Age | Legislation |
|---|-------------------------------|-----|---|
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 16 | Article 76 of the General Child Protection Code (31) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Article 247 of the Labor Code (42) |
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | Yes | | Articles 76–77 of the General Child Protection Code (31) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes | | Law 052/15; Articles 1 and 3–4 of Law 025/2003; Article 1 of Law 2013-011 (43-45) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes | | Articles 1 and 3 of Law 025/2003; Article 54 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (43,46) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes | | Article 1 of Law 025/2003; Articles 24–26 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (43,46) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes | | Articles 3–5 and 14 of Law 93-37 on the Prohibition of Production, Trafficking, and Use of Drugs and Illicit Substances; Article 42 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (46,47) |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment | Yes | 18 | Article 7 of Law 62132/1962 (48) |
| Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military | N/A* | | |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups | Yes | | Article 43 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (46) |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 14 | Article 1 of Law 2001-054 (49) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Article 1 of Law 2001-054 (49) |

* No conscription (50)

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In June 2018, the Government of Mauritania enacted the General Child Protection Code, which set the minimum age for work at age 16. (29,31,51) The Code allows children ages 16 and 17 to work as long as it does not occur at night, exceed 8 hours per day, or impede school attendance. In addition, the Code prohibits the employment of children in work that exposes them to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools; and work in unhealthy environments, which may expose children to hazardous substances or temperatures. (31) However, the Code does not determine the types of work that are hazardous, including work domestic work, an area in which there is evidence of children carrying heavy loads and working long hours. (8,31) The Code increases the penalties associated with violations of child labor laws up to \$41,000, and criminalizes commercial sexual exploitation of children and forced begging. It also increases the prison term for trafficking children from 10 to 20 years. (13,31,52,53)

The Labor Code allows children ages 12 and older to perform light work, as long as it does not impede their school attendance, does not exceed 2 hours per day, and is authorized by the Ministry of Labor. (42) However, the Labor Code does not specify the activities in which light work may be permitted. (54) In addition, although the General Child Protection Code should be read as superseding the Labor Code, the Labor Code has not been revised to reflect the increase in the minimum age for work from age 14 to age 16 that the 2018 law established. (31,42) Children in Mauritania are required to attend school only up to age 14. This standard makes children ages 14 through 16 vulnerable to child labor, because they are not required to attend school but are not legally allowed to work. (31,49)

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's Directorate of Labor and Inspection | Enforces labor laws and investigate Labor Code infractions, including violations related to minimum wage and hazardous work. (17,55,56) |
| Ministry of the Interior's Special Brigade for Minors | Investigates crimes against children, including human trafficking, and monitors religious schools (<i>mahadras</i>) to ensure that children are not forced to beg on behalf of their teachers. Mainly operates in Nouakchott. (9,17,37,57,58) |
| Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family (MASEF) Office of Childhood | Develops and implements programs to protect vulnerable children and monitor alleged violations of child labor laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Manages the Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children. (9,17,55) |
| Ministry of Justice's Directorate of the Judiciary for the Protection of Children | Coordinates child protection issues and oversees the Special Brigade for Minors and tribunals that sentence child offenders. (15,17,57) |
| National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) | Advocates the eradication of slavery, receives human rights complaints, and conducts investigations on human rights violations, including the worst forms of child labor. Independent ombudsman body. (9,17,37,63) |
| Commissariat on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action | Coordinates the development and implementation of government policies related to human rights, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Carries out awareness-raising campaigns to combat slavery and human trafficking. Semi-autonomous body, under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister. (5,55,64) |
| National Agency to Fight Against the Vestiges of Slavery, Integration, and Fight Against Poverty (Tadamoun) | Develops and implements programs to tackle poverty, promotes the integration of refugees, and rehabilitates former slaves. (19,55,65) Files complaints on behalf of citizens who accuse their employers of practicing slavery, and brings cases of alleged slavery to the authorities for investigation. (3,6,63,66) In 2018, signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Agency for Register of Population and Securities (ANRPTS) to register all vulnerable individuals beginning in 2019, including children taking part in the Tekavoul cash transfer program, which targets 100,000 vulnerable households. (33) |
| Anti-Slavery Courts | Prosecute crimes related to slavery and provide free legal assistance to victims, including children. The three regional courts located in Nema, Nouakchott, and Nouadhibou were created under the Roadmap and Action Plan for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery. (6,67-69) |

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Labor Law Enforcement

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

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

| Overview of Labor Law Enforcement | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|---------------|-----------------|
| Labor Inspectorate Funding | \$33,300 (13) | \$33,300 (30) |
| Number of Labor Inspectors | 67 (58) | 67 (29,30) |
| Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties | Yes (13,70) | No (29,71) |
| Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors | Yes (13) | Yes (29) |
| Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor | N/A (13) | Unknown (29,72) |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Number of Labor Inspections Conducted | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Number Conducted at Worksite | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Routine Inspections Conducted | No (13) | No (29) |
| Routine Inspections Targeted | N/A (13) | N/A (29) |
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted | Yes (13) | Yes (29) |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted | Unknown (13) | 7 (29) |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists | Yes (13) | Yes (29) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | Yes (13) | Yes (29) |

In 2018, the Ministry of Labor employed 47 full-time labor inspectors and 20 full-time labor controllers, and 19 trainee labor inspectors were enrolled at the National School of Administration. Although the General Child Protection Code was implemented during the reporting period, labor inspectors did not receive training on this law. (29-31) In addition, reports indicate that the Ministry of Labor lacked equipment, training, transportation, and funding to conduct child labor inspections, especially in remote locations and in the informal sector, which employs more than 40 percent of the workforce. (13,17,36,55,58,73-76)

Labor inspectors prepare reports when they find a labor violation and may include a recommendation for a penalty; however, they must file the reports with the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice will then assess the penalty for the labor violation. (72) In addition, the penalties established for violating child labor laws are insufficient and do not generally deter violations. (15,77)

In 2018, the labor inspectorate conducted unannounced labor inspections for the first time; previous labor inspections had been conducted only after a complaint was filed and the worksite received notice of the inspection. Labor inspectors visited seven worksites that had previously been the subjects of labor complaints; however, it is unclear whether any of these complaints were related to child labor. (72)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritania took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases related to hereditary slavery and forced child begging.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators | Yes (13) | Yes (29) |
| Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor | Yes (13) | Yes (29) |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Yes (13) | Yes (32) |
| Number of Investigations | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Number of Violations Found | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Number of Convictions | Unknown (13) | Unknown (29) |
| Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor | No (13) | No (29) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | Yes (13) | Yes (29) |

During the reporting period, the Special Brigade for Minors employed 30 officers and received training on laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including the new General Child Protection Code. According to international organizations and NGOs, there is little to no coordination among enforcement agencies. (29,72) Efforts made by criminal law enforcement authorities to combat the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery, remained inadequate, given the magnitude of the problem. (6)

In 2018, the combined budget of the three Anti-Slavery Courts was \$19,444, which experts and court officials agree is inadequate. In addition, court officials have not received training in enforcement of the 2015 anti-slavery law, and Mauritanian judicial officials often dismiss or fail to refer cases to the Anti-Slavery Courts due to a lack of training. (32,78) During the reporting period the Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner and the ILO, organized a 2-day workshop on the 2015 law criminalizing slavery and on the needs of the specialized anti-slavery courts, in which 40 law enforcement officials participated. In addition, the Ministry, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, conducted a workshop that reviewed existing legislative frameworks on trafficking in persons in Mauritania and other countries in the region. (32,79)

In March 2018, the Anti-Slavery Court of Nouadhibou secured two separate convictions for slavery crimes, including child slavery. In one case, the court sentenced two offenders to 20 years' imprisonment and ordered them to pay about \$14,500 in restitution to the victims. However, neither of the offenders has been imprisoned—one died prior to the conviction date, and the other fled prosecution prior to the trial and was tried in absentia. (53) In the second case, the individual was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and ordered to pay about \$7,000 in restitution to the victims; however, the offender, alleging health concerns, was granted a compassionate provisional release from imprisonment in June 2018. (53,80-82) During the reporting period, the Nouakchott Anti-Slavery Court heard a third slavery case, which was dismissed because the defendant's lawyers argued that their client had not been informed about the transfer of the case to the Anti-Slavery Court. In addition, there were seven pending cases before the Anti-Slavery Court of Nema, and five new anti-slavery cases were initiated during the reporting period. (32) In May 2018, a number of judicial officers were transferred to different posts, which resulted in the removal of experienced judges from the Nema and Nouakchott Anti-Slavery Courts. The Government of Mauritania announced a second judicial "reshuffle" in December 2018, intended to strengthen the Anti-Slavery Courts. (32,83,84)

According to the 2015 anti-slavery law, the only entities other than *Tadamoun* that can file criminal cases on behalf of former slaves are legally registered human rights associations that have been operating for 5 years in Mauritania. The government continued to prevent the registration of some anti-slavery organizations and associations that work for the promotion and protection of human rights of the Haratine ethnic minority and former slave groups. As a result, these organizations continue to be unable to submit complaints on behalf of these groups, even though the anti-slavery organizations may have been operating in the country for 5 or more years. (78,85,86)

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In addition, there are reports that investigative judges who receive anti-slavery cases may try to pressure slavery victims to drop their cases or accept mediation in lieu of prosecution. The investigative judges may also drop slavery-related charges or classify the case as a lesser crime. (29,32,78) The obstacles that victims of slavery encounter in filing complaints and the government’s failure to adequately investigate these cases may be due to the insufficient allocation of resources by the government and a lack of political will to prosecute these cases to their maximum legal liability. (29,32,78) In addition, two laws adopted in 2018 by the Government of Mauritania have drawn widespread concern in the international community. The anti-discrimination law, enacted in January, and the law on apostasy-related crimes, adopted in April, may be used to retaliate against anti-slavery organizations and restrict their ability to function, including their ability to file criminal cases or advocate for the end of slavery. (78,85,87-91) Although by the end of 2018 there were no reports that the laws has been used against anti-slavery organizations, there are still concerns that the laws could impede access to justice or services for victims of slavery, including children. (78,85,90,92,93)

In August 2018, according to civil society organizations, two members of the anti-slavery organization Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA) were arrested and imprisoned under false charges. (94-96) In December 2018, the Nouakchott Court of Appeals rejected an order to transfer the leader of the IRA to a criminal court. The two members were released on December 31, 2018. (97-99) Although the government has released 11 of the 13 members of the IRA who were arrested in June 2016 for their alleged participation in a Nouakchott riot and membership in the unregistered organization, 2 remain in prison. Some of the freed IRA members claimed that they were tortured while they were in police custody. (6,86)

Evidence suggests that some police, prosecutors, and judges do not investigate cases of slavery after complaints are received, and that the government has prosecuted cases for lesser offenses to avoid bringing a slavery case to trial. In some cases, this is due to allegations of corruption or lack of political will to prosecute suspected slaveholders, or it may be due to misunderstanding of the 2015 Anti-Slavery Law. (6,100) Enforcement authorities, including the Anti-Slavery Courts, lack personnel, funding, and training to adequately coordinate and enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (4,6,12,13,67,69,74,101)

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.

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

| Coordinating Body | Role & Description |
|---|--|
| National Council for Child Protection* | Established during the reporting period, aims to develop and implement policies and programs to eradicate all forms of violence against children, including child labor. Chaired by the Prime Minister’s adviser on social affairs and includes stakeholders in children’s affairs. (28,32,59-62) The Ministry of Labor did not participate in the activities of the National Child Protection Council. |
| Inter-ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights | Coordinates and monitors government efforts to promote human rights in Mauritania, including those related to the UN CRC. Led by Commissioner for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Relations with Civil Society and includes representatives from the <i>Tadamoun</i> , CNDH, and other ministries. (3,55,102,103) Although the Committee met weekly in 2018, it did not produce any specific outcomes due to structural reorganization, which took place during the reporting period. (32) |

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

Research suggests that the lack of inclusion of relevant civil society groups, including worker and employer organizations, hampers the ability of the Inter-ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights to carry out efforts to promote human rights, including combating slavery and its vestiges. (2,55,67)

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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 funding and implementation of key policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

| Policy | Description |
|---|---|
| National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor (2015–2020) | Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by strengthening child labor laws, training relevant government officials, implementing awareness-raising campaigns, and mobilizing funds for social programs to withdraw children from child labor. Overseen by the Ministry of Labor. (1,8,13,55) In 2018, with assistance from ILO, organized a workshop in Kaedi to build the capacity of labor inspectors and non-governmental actors to combat child labor. (32) |
| Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development (2016–2030) | Aims to reduce poverty, promote sustainable development, and increase access to fundamental social services. Overseen by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development. (105,106) Integrates strategies to increase birth registration and access to compulsory education, strengthen social protection systems for children, and support efforts to combat slavery, including its vestiges. (105) In 2018, MASEF and ANRPTS collaborated to compile a list of 10,000 children without documentation through national child protection systems. The registration process for these children is expected to begin in 2019. (32,107) |

In 2018, the government, in collaboration with UNICEF and Save the Children, organized a workshop to begin updating and aligning the draft National Child Protection Strategy with the General Child Protection Code, which was adopted during the reporting period. (5,32,108) Although the government continued to review the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons that was drafted in 2015, it did not officially adopt the Plan during the reporting period. (6,109,110) Reports indicate that efforts to implement most of the key policies related to child labor, particularly the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor, have been delayed due to insufficient allocation of resources. (9,13,29,32,34,70,74)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

| Program | Description |
|--|--|
| From Protocol to Practice: A Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labor (2015–2020) | USDOL-funded global project implemented by the ILO to support global and national efforts aimed at countering the forced labor of adults and children through the 2014 ILO Protocol and supporting the Recommendation to C. 29 on Forced Labor. (111,112) In 2018, conducted a training on the 2015 Anti-Slavery Law for law enforcement officials, including labor inspectors, magistrates and judges of inquiry from the Special Criminal Courts, in collaboration with UNHCR and the Ministry of Justice. (32,108) The Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Administration Modernization convened a research roundtable for a qualitative study examining forced labor and employment relationships leading to risk of forced labor. The Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action, Direction of the Social Register, <i>Tadamoun</i> , Directorate of Employment, and representatives from civil society, including human rights organizations, attended this roundtable. (32,108) Additional information is available on the USDOL website. |
| Technical Support on Social Dialogue and Labor Administration (2017–2018) | A \$328,000 ILO-funded project to build the capacity of the Ministry of Labor to improve enforcement of labor laws, including those related to child labor. (113) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Technical Support on Dialogue and Labor Administration during the reporting period. |
| Cash Transfer Tekavoul (2015–2020) | A \$29 million <i>Tadamoun</i> program, supported by the World Bank, that provides cash assistance to families with school-age children, conditioned on children's school attendance. (114) In 2018, held a regional workshop for local government and civil society representatives, during which the <i>Tadamoun</i> Director declared the program's goal to reach 100,000 beneficiary households by 2021. (32,115,116) |
| Program to Eradicate the Effects of Slavery† | Government program that supports the reintegration and rehabilitation of former slaves. (6,66) In 2018, the program opened 19 schools and continued to implement income-generating activities in communities of slave descendants and other vulnerable populations. (5,29,32,117,118) |

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

| Program | Description |
|---|--|
| Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children† | MASEF-operated program that provides food, shelter, education, and vocational training to vulnerable children, many of whom are <i>talibés</i> . Operates in Aleg, Kaedi, Kiffa, Nouadhibou, Rosso, and Nouakchott. (9,17,36) In 2018, the government allocated a budget of \$100,000 to manage the centers, which allowed them to provide services to 360 children, and conducted a capacity-building workshop with Save the Children for center staff on protecting migrant children from human trafficking and exploitation. (5,32,119) |
| Access to Justice and Human Rights Program | USDOS- and USAID-funded program implemented by the American Bar Association to promote the social and political rights of marginalized groups, including former and current child victims of slavery. (120-122) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Access to Justice and Human Rights Program during the reporting period. |
| Decent Work for Migrant Youth in the Fishing Sector (2017–2021) | A \$17 million ILO- and Government of Germany-funded, 4-year project that aims to promote decent work among migrant youth working in the artisanal fishing sector in Mauritania. Aims to reach at least 9,000 recipients by the second year of the project and conduct an analysis of child labor in the fishing sector. (125,126) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Decent Work for Youth in the Fishing Sector during the reporting period. |
| UNICEF Country Program (2012–2018) | A \$10.3 million UNICEF-funded program that supported the government's efforts to improve education, birth registration rates, social inclusion, and protection for children, including refugees. (15,127,128) In 2018, provided access to education for 5,500 refugee children in the M'Bera camp, inaugurated the National Council for Child Protection, and published the Mauritania Country Program for 2018–2022. (32,59,129-131) |

† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritania.

Since 2016, the Government of Mauritania has opened 43 schools in communities largely populated by slave descendants, including 19 schools during the reporting period. (32)

Although Mauritania has social programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially in agriculture, herding, and domestic work, and for children in hereditary and indentured slavery. (15,55,134) Moreover, some government officials do not acknowledge that slavery continues to exist. (2,4,22,55,74) In addition, the lack of recent data on slavery limits the government's ability to develop effective social programs to comprehensively address this issue. Existing social programs for former slaves and awareness of the national laws on slavery are insufficient. (2,3,7,22)

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 Mauritania (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| Legal Framework | Ensure that the law's provisions on light work are specific enough to prevent children from being involved in child labor. | 2015 – 2018 |
| | Ensure that domestic work is included in the hazardous work list. | 2009 – 2018 |
| | Ensure that the age up to which education is compulsory is equal to the minimum age for work. | 2018 |
| Enforcement | Increase the personnel, training, and resources for labor and criminal law enforcement agencies, including the Anti-Slavery Courts, to adequately enforce labor laws, especially in remote areas and in the informal sector. | 2010 – 2018 |
| | Strengthen the labor inspection system by authorizing the labor inspectorate to assess penalties and initiate routine and targeted inspections, rather than performing inspections solely based on complaints received. | 2014 – 2018 |
| | Increase efforts to ensure that cases of the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery and forced begging, are investigated and prosecuted in accordance with the law. | 2016 – 2018 |
| | Publish information on the number of labor inspections, child labor law violations, and penalties assessed, and the number of criminal investigations, violations found, prosecutions, and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor. | 2011 – 2018 |

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

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| Enforcement | Legally recognize civil society organizations that work to protect the human rights of the Haratine ethnic minority and former slave groups, in particular those that assist victims of slavery in filing cases, register births, and ensure access to education, and ensure that legislation is not used to impair their ability to function. | 2017 – 2018 |
| | Ensure that <i>Tadamoun</i> pursues its mandate to submit complaints of slavery on behalf of victims. | 2017 – 2018 |
| | Hold government officials accountable for alleged corruption and mishandling of legal cases related to crimes on the worst forms of child labor, including on slavery offenses. | 2017 – 2018 |
| | Ensure the safety of anti-slavery activists, and allow peaceful public discourse and assembly on slavery, slavery-like practices, and the vestiges of slavery free from government interference. | 2011 – 2018 |
| | Ensure that penalties are high enough to deter violators of child labor laws. | 2015 – 2018 |
| | Ensure that labor inspectors are trained on the General Child Protection Code. | 2018 |
| Coordination | Ensure that relevant civil society organizations are included in the Inter-ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights. | 2017 – 2018 |
| | Ensure the Ministry of Labor's participation in the National Child Protection Council. | 2018 |
| Government Policies | Ensure that key policies related to child labor, particularly the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor, receive sufficient funds for effective implementation. | 2016 – 2018 |
| | Approve the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. | 2015 – 2018 |
| Social Programs | Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including those from families of slave descent and refugees, by increasing school infrastructure and teacher availability, especially in rural areas. | 2011 – 2018 |
| | Ensure that all children are able to obtain birth certificates to increase their access to secondary education and reduce their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. | 2016 – 2018 |
| | Expand the scope of programs to address child labor, including in agriculture, herding, and domestic work, and the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary and indentured slavery. | 2009 – 2018 |
| | Implement a continuous awareness-raising program for government officials on the laws related to slavery and the worst forms of child labor. | 2012 – 2018 |
| | Conduct research and collect data on slavery to inform the development of effective policies and programs to identify and protect children who are at risk. | 2010 – 2018 |
| | Increase funding for social programs that provide services to former slaves. | 2015 – 2018 |

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