

In 2018, the Kyrgyz Republic made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government continued evening classes for secondary school students in districts with high numbers of child laborers and a cash transfer program for families living in difficult situations. However, children in the Kyrgyz Republic engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. The government's child trafficking laws are not in line with international standards, and research indicates that the State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety employed an insufficient number of labor inspectors. In addition, the compulsory education age remained lower than the minimum age for work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Kyrgyz Republic engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-4) Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. (5-9) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Kyrgyz Republic.

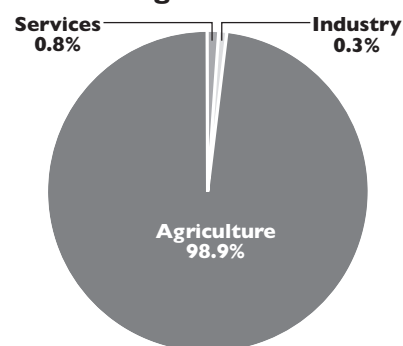
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	33.9 (397,407)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	86.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	41.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		103.8

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 National Child Labour Survey, 2014. (11)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



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	Cultivating cotton, tobacco,† rice, potatoes, sugar beets, and wheat (3,5-9,12-15) Raising cattle and sheep (3,8,12,13,16)
Industry	Coal mining† (3,9,12,13,16,17) Brick making (3,12,13,16) Construction, including lifting and portering construction materials, and cutting metal sheets for roofs (3,13,16-18)
Services	Working in bazaars, including loading and unloading goods, portering, collecting plastic bottles and garbage, and selling items, including food and newspapers (2,5,7,9,15,16,19-21) Washing cars (7,16) Working in restaurants and cafes, including serving food and washing dishes (5,12,16,22) Street work, including begging and shoe shining (1,12,14,15) Domestic work, including child care (1,2,6,9,14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in raising cattle and sheep, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,9) Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-4) Use in illicit activities, including trafficking drugs, as a result of human trafficking (4,23)

† 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.

Kyrgyz Republic

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT




Hazardous child labor is most prevalent in the *oblasts* (provinces) of Naryn and Osh. (21) Children from the Kyrgyz Republic who travel to Kazakhstan to work, either with their parents or unaccompanied, cannot attend school due to lack of documentation. These children engage in child labor in Kazakhstan in construction, farming, herding, or selling products in the market; some fall victim to forced child labor. (24) There is some evidence that children migrate with their families to work in the cotton fields in Kazakhstan. (25)

The inability to enroll in school makes children from a variety of circumstances vulnerable to child labor. (3,20,26-28) According to UNICEF, an estimated 650,000–750,000 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic work abroad, and an additional 1 million are internal migrants. (26,28) Some children, who are left behind when their parents migrate to work in other countries or other areas of the Kyrgyz Republic, could not access their birth certificates or guardianship documents, which are required for school enrollment. (5,12,26,28-30) Many ethnic Lyuli children, a group of approximately 3,500 Central Asian Roma people living in the Kyrgyz Republic, are also prevented from attending school due to not having the required documentation. (27,31) Similarly, many migrant children lack registration documents. (26) Children with disabilities and those living and working on the street also have difficulty accessing education. (3,20) According to the Ministry of Education and Science, residence registration is not required for children to attend school; however, research reports that some schools require residence registration, known as *propiska*, for school enrollment. (2,3,6,32)

II. Legal Framework for Child Labor

The Kyrgyz Republic 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 the Kyrgyz Republic's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including prohibition of child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Article 18 of the Labor Code (26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 294 of the Labor Code; Article 15 of the Code on Children (26,27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 294 of the Labor Code; Decree 314; Annex I of Decree 548 (26,29,33)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 10 of the Labor Code; Article 15.2 of the Code on Children; Article 1 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking; Article 124 of the Criminal Code (26,27,30,31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 1 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking; Article 124 of the Criminal Code (30,31)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 157 of the Criminal Code; Articles 5 and 15 of the Code on Children (27,30)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 157, 247, 249, and 375 of the Criminal Code; Articles 5 and 15 of the Code on Children (27,30)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 24.1 of the Law on Military Service (32)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 17.1 and 22.1 of the Law on Military Service (32)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 124, 226–2, 229, and 375 of the Criminal Code (30)
Compulsory Education Age	No	15‡	Article 16 of the Law on Education (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 16 of the Law on Education (34)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (34)

According to Article 6 of the Labor Code, protections to children granted in the labor code, such as the minimum age of employment and prohibitions on hazardous work, are not extended to children engaged in non-contractual employment. (26)

The prohibitions against child trafficking are insufficient because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking. (30,31)

Children in the Kyrgyz Republic are required to attend school only until grade nine, which is typically when they reach age 14 or 15. (5,6,35) This standard makes children ages 14 and 15 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to be in school, but they also are not yet legally permitted to work.

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 authority of the State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety	Monitors work sites and refers child laborers to social services. Coordinates with the Inspectorate for Minors' Affairs in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor General's Office, and regional State District Administration authorities to enforce child labor laws. (16)
Ministry of Internal Affairs, Inspectorate for Minors' Affairs	Enforce criminal laws related to child labor, including its worst forms. Conducts independent inspections and joint raids with the State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety to find neglected or abused children. Refers children to social institutions for care. (16)
Prosecutor General's Office	Enforces and applies labor-related laws, including labor inspections and investigations of child labor violations, in coordination with the State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety. (16)
Oblast Administration	Enforces child labor laws at the <i>oblast</i> (province) level. (16)
Ministry of Labor and Social Development	Serves as the key government agency for children's issues. Protects children and families in difficult living situations, including child laborers. Coordinates with <i>oblast</i> -level authorities to investigate violations of child labor laws. (16)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in the Kyrgyz Republic took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety 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 (36)	Unknown (37)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (36)	30 (37)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (20)	Yes (20)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	No (36)	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	No (36)	No (16)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (36)	799‡ (37)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (36)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (36)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (36)	Unknown (37)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (36)	Unknown (37)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (36)	Yes (37)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (36)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (38,39)	Yes (38,39)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (37)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (20)	Yes (20)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (40)	Yes (40)

‡ Data are from January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2018.

In 2018, the State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety employed 30 labor inspectors. (37) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of the Kyrgyz Republic's workforce, which includes over 2.8 million workers. (41) According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 20,000 workers in transitioning economies, the Kyrgyz Republic would employ about 142 labor inspectors. (20,42,43) The State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety acknowledged that the number of labor inspectors was inadequate to ensure appropriate enforcement of child labor laws. (20) According to the ILO, the Inspectorate lacked sufficient funding to carry out inspections. (16)

During the reporting period, the State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety identified 236 child laborers. Separately, investigators of the Inspectorate for Minors' Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs identified 554 child laborers. (37)

As of January 1, 2019, a 2-year moratorium on labor inspections came into effect, as a result of which inspections can only be conducted in emergency situations, such as a case in which a worker's life is in danger. (44-46) The Prime Minister described the moratorium as a measure to "improve the business environment." (65)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Kyrgyz Republic 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 training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (36)	No (16)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (47)	Yes (48)
Number of Investigations	4† (47)	70 (48)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (36)	36 (48)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (36)	7 (48)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Number of Convictions	0 (36)	Unknown (16)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (36)	Yes (16)

† Data are from January to September 2017.

In 2018, 46 judges, 49 prosecutors, and 91 police officers participated in trainings on human trafficking. The Ministry of Internal Affairs provided 600 officials with training to counter human trafficking. (48) During the reporting period, inspectors of the State Inspectorate on Ecological and Technical Safety identified 8 children engaged in the worst forms of child labor. Additionally, the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Inspectorate for Minors' Affairs identified 22 children engaged in worst forms of child labor. (37) The government also identified 36 child victims of human trafficking. (48) It is unclear whether these two sets of statistics overlap.

The government investigated cases of human trafficking involving children. (48) Five individuals were convicted of human trafficking charges during the reporting period; it is unclear whether these overlapped with cases of child trafficking. (48)

Reports suggest Kyrgyz police officers sexually exploit female trafficking victims, including some younger than age 18. Concerns persist about police misconduct, including allegations that police threaten and extort sex trafficking victims, including minors, and reports indicate that police accept bribes from alleged traffickers to drop cases. (4)

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 coordination among agencies.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Children's Affairs Commission	Assesses the needs of children in difficult situations, including child laborers; creates individual development plans; and monitors service delivery. Members include social workers from regional Departments of Child Protection of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development and law enforcement authorities. (16) In 2018, the Commission met regularly to ensure implementation of individual action plan and service delivery, as described in the Regulations on the Procedure for the Identification of Children and Families in Difficult Situations. (16,40)
Coordination Council for Social Protection and Children's Rights	Develops policies to eliminate child labor. (49) Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, members include representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development and three other ministries. (50,51) Met quarterly in 2018. (16)
Coordination Council on Migration	Monitors and combats human trafficking as a key priority. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Social Issues. Members include representatives from the Office of the President, government ministries, international organizations, and NGOs. (52) In 2018, the Council held 4 meetings. (48)

Based on available information, lack of nation-wide information sharing between government agencies and NGOs prevented stakeholders from identifying children at risk of human trafficking. (16)

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
Inter-agency Action Plan on Measures to Prevent the Involvement of Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2018)	Aims to address the worst forms of child labor by identifying children at risk of child labor, including those in difficult living situations; providing social services; conducting awareness-raising campaigns, including seminars for social pedagogues and forums for children and their parents on hazardous work; sharing experiences and best practices with international organizations and NGOs; and creating a manual on child protection for labor inspectors. (53,54) In 2018, the Children's Affairs Commission implemented this plan. Social workers and law enforcement officers met regularly to ensure service delivery to children. (16)
Regulations on the Procedure for the Identification of Children and Families in Difficult Situations	Establishes the process for identifying children in difficult living situations, including those engaged in the worst forms of child labor. Receives complaints, conducts outreach activities, devises individual action plans, removes children from the worst forms of child labor, and provides financial and educational services. (40) The Children's Affairs Commission met regularly to consider individual cases of children and to ensure individual development plans are implemented within 6 months. (16,40)
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2017–2020)	Improves legal framework on human trafficking; improves dissemination of information on human trafficking risks for migrants and vulnerable populations; raises awareness about protections for victims and criminal penalties for perpetrators; and improves coordination among government agencies, NGOs, and international partners. (55) In June, government agencies, in cooperation with international organizations, developed a standardized media plan to increase public awareness of human trafficking. During the reporting period, the government held a national campaign called "100 Days to Prevent Human Trafficking" to raise awareness about human trafficking that reached approximately 10,000 people through roundtable discussions, press conferences, song and dance contests, and TV programs. (48)

The government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the National Education Strategy and Roadmap on Out-of-School Children. (35,56)

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 implementation and adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Combating Child Labor in Central Asia - Commitment Becomes Action (PROACT CAR Phase III) (2010–2018)	\$4.57 million Government of Germany-funded 8-year project implemented by the ILO to mainstream child labor issues into national policies and legislation, build the capacity of stakeholders, and provide direct services to children withdrawn from the worst forms of child labor. (56,57) In 2018, the ILO held a 2-day event, in which 18 teams of information technology experts competed in creating a mobile application to help track the status of a case and included child labor identification, needs assessment, and recommendations for services. The Ministry of Labor and Social Development planned to test the app as a child labor monitoring system in a pilot program. (58)
Evening Classes for Child Laborers†	Government-funded program that provides evening classes to secondary school students in districts with high numbers of child laborers. (36) In 2018, the Bishkek Mayor's Office provided funding for the schools in Bishkek. (16)
Social Support for Children and Families in Difficult Living Situations†	Government-funded program to monitor places where children may be working, with a primary focus on bazaars, and to return these children to school. (59) Research did not find information about the implementation of this program in 2018.
Cash Transfer Program†	Government-funded cash transfer program for families living in difficult situations, including families with children engaged in child labor. (49) In 2018, the Ministry of Labor and Social Development continued to provide cash assistance to such families. However, based on available information, the amount of assistance appears to be low. (60)
Ministry of Education and Science National School Attendance Database†	Government-funded program implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science to pilot a national electronic database to track children who do not attend school. Following development and use throughout the country, database information is intended to be shared with the Ministry of Labor and Social Development to assist children engaged in child labor. (6) The database is meant to provide information to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on cases of criminal violations of child labor laws. In addition, school social pedagogues would use the database to work with families, ensuring that children attend school. (6) Research did not find information about the use of the database in 2018.

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

Program	Description
Support of Family and Protection of Children (2018–2028) [†]	Government-funded program that includes limited activities to address child labor, including revising Decree 314, the hazardous work list for children. Responsible for organizing competitive bids for projects, including one that will result in four new social services centers by 2020 for families and children in difficult living situations. Provides local administrations with income-generating ideas for families in difficult living situations. (61,62) Research did not find information about the implementation of this program in 2018.

[†] Program is funded by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

[‡] The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (63,64)

Although the Kyrgyz Republic has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking and in agriculture, including cultivating cotton.

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 the Kyrgyz Republic (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's minimum age provisions and hazardous work prohibitions apply to all children, including those working without an employment contract.	2014 – 2018
	Ensure that child trafficking laws do not require an element of force or deception and are in accordance with international standards.	2015 – 2018
	Ensure that the age up to which education is compulsory is the same as the minimum age for work.	2014 – 2018
Enforcement	Publish information about the funding of the State Inspectorate; the number of labor inspections at worksites; the number of violations and penalties imposed and collected; information regarding whether inspections are targeted; and the number of convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.	2011 – 2018
	Strengthen the labor inspection system by providing child labor training for labor inspectors and new criminal investigators.	2014 – 2018
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice. Provide inspectors with adequate training and resources to conduct inspections.	2012 – 2018
	Lift the moratorium on labor inspections.	2018
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies investigate and prosecute violations related to the worst forms of child labor, including cases of possible police complicity in abusing victims.	2015-2018
Coordination	Ensure nation-wide information sharing among stakeholders, including government agencies and NGOs, to identify and protect children at risk of human trafficking.	2018
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Education Strategy and the Roadmap on Out-of-School Children.	2015 – 2018
Social Programs	Ensure that all children have access to free education, including Lyuli children, children with disabilities, those living and working on the street, and those without birth certificates and guardianship documents.	2009 – 2018
	Implement all social programs, including Social Support for Children and Families in Difficult Living Situations, the Ministry of Education and Science National School Attendance Database, and the Support of Family and Protection of Children program.	2016 – 2018
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking and in agriculture, including cultivating cotton.	2014 – 2018

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