

In 2019, Georgia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed and implemented the 2019 Law on Occupational Safety, which grants labor inspectors the ability to enter any business for occupational health and safety reasons without prior notification. In addition, law enforcement agencies increased their efforts to combat child begging by investigating, prosecuting, and convicting individuals who force children to beg and providing services to child victims of forced begging. However, children in Georgia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The labor inspectorate did not conduct inspections in the agriculture sector, and the labor law governing the minimum age for work is not in compliance with international standards because it does not apply to informal work. In addition, the compulsory education age leaves children who are 15 years of age vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work full time.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Georgia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-3) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Georgia.

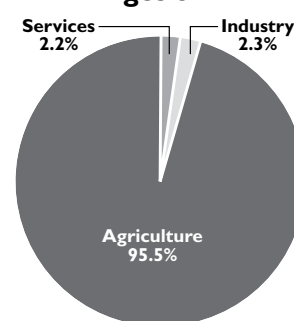
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	2.9 (13,547)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	96.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	3.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		95.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Child Labor Survey (NCLS), 2015. (5)

Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, activities unknown (1,6)
Services	Street work, including begging and vending (1,7,8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,3) Forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3)

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

Georgia is a source and transit country for child trafficking, especially of girls, to Turkey, China, the United Arab Emirates, and Cyprus. (2,7) Limited evidence indicates that children may perform hazardous activities in construction. (9) Sources report that Roma and Azerbaijani Kurd ethnic minorities and refugee and internally displaced children from Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova are subjected to forced begging in Georgia. (2,3,7,8,10) Estimates suggest that 1,000 to 2,000 children earn a living by begging, primarily caused by poverty or domestic violence. (1,7,8) Many of the child beggars are from Roma communities. (7,8)

Some children from Roma communities lack identity documents and, therefore, have challenges accessing education. (10) This challenge remains despite changes to the Rule on Issuance of Identification and Passport

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under the Law on Registration of Georgian and Foreign Citizens to ease restrictions on obtaining government identification. However, UNICEF noted that some families continue to destroy identification and other documents in an effort to avoid interaction with state officials. (8,11) In addition, socially vulnerable children, children from impoverished families, and those who live in rural areas have difficulty accessing education. (10-13) Children who do not attend school are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.

Lack of information limits an assessment of the types of work that children perform and the sectors in which they work in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are occupied by Russian forces and not under control of the central government. (1,2,14)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Georgia 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 Georgia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Article 4 of the Labor Code of Georgia (15)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 4 of the Labor Code of Georgia; Articles 2 and 5 of the Law on Occupational Safety (15,16)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 4(4) of the Labor Code of Georgia; Articles 2 and 5 of the Law on Occupational Safety; Resolution 381 Approving the List of Dangerous, Heavy, Harmful, and Hazardous Works (15-17)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 30 of the Constitution of Georgia; Articles 143-i, 143-ii, and 143-iii of the Criminal Code of Georgia; Law of Georgia on Combating Human Trafficking; Article 55 of the Children's Rights Code (18-21)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 143, 143-1, 143-2, 143-3, and 172 of the Criminal Code of Georgia; Law of Georgia on Combating Human Trafficking (19,20)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 143(1), 143(2), 143(3), 253, 254 255, 255-1, and 255-2 of the Criminal Code of Georgia; Article 56 of the Children's Rights Code (20,21)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 171 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (20)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 10 of the Law of Georgia on Military Duty and Military Service (22)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 9 and 21 of the Law of Georgia on Military Duty and Military Service (22)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 410 of the Criminal Code of Georgia; Article 59 of the Children's Rights Code (20,21)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 2 and 9 of the Law of Georgia on General Education (23)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 22 of the Law of Georgia on General Education (23)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (23)

In 2019, the government passed the Children's Rights Code, which establishes children's rights to be protected from harmful activities, such as engaging in hazardous child labor, and forbids forms of exploitation of children, including forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (21)

The labor law governing the minimum age for work is not in compliance with international standards because it does not apply to informal work. (15,24) The compulsory education age leaves children who are 15 years of age vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor because they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work full time. Article 4 of the Labor Code specifies conditions under which 14 and 15 year olds may perform light work, and Article 14 prescribes the hours, but the law does not specify the activities in which light work is permissible. (15,24) Article 4 of the Labor Code stipulates that children under the age of 14 are allowed to work only in sport, art, and culture, as well as some advertising activities. (15,24)

Georgia's laws do not criminally prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of children for the production or trafficking of drugs. (20)

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, Health, and Social Affairs (MoLHSA) that may hinder effective enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Affairs (MoLHSA)	Oversees child welfare issues and pursues enforcement of labor laws. (10) Through the Department of Labor Inspection, enforces occupational safety and health laws, including those related to hazardous child labor, and enforces prohibitions on forced labor and human trafficking. (1) Through the Department of Labor and Employment Policy, revises laws and policies to be in accordance with international standards. (25) Through the Social Services Agency, administers social benefits such as targeted social assistance, health care, and vouchers for day care, and employs social workers who oversee child protection. (1) Receives complaints through the Child Protection and Social Programs sub-department, and refers complaints of child labor violations to law enforcement agencies for investigation. (25)
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA)	Enforces criminal laws related to child labor and child trafficking. (1) Through District Police Units, collects information on minors in each jurisdiction and visits minors' families to inform them of their rights. (25) Through the Human Rights Department, ensures prompt responses to human trafficking crimes and suggests recommendations for investigations. (7) Operates a hotline that is available in Georgian, Russian, and English. (7)
Central Criminal Police Department within MoIA	Leads criminal investigations of trafficking in persons, including the trafficking of children, through the Division for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration. (7) Identifies human traffickers and collates data on traffickers across various agencies through the Information-Analytical Department. (26) Investigates possible human trafficking schemes by deploying teams of two law enforcement officials in Mobile Units to investigate companies offering suspicious work opportunities abroad. (27)
Prosecutor General's Office	Prosecutes cases of child trafficking. (3) Since 2018, operates as an independent entity separate from the Ministry of Justice. (28)
Joint Child Referral Mechanism	Ensures inter-agency coordination of the enforcement of child labor laws and enumerates the procedures for referring children subject to any form of violence, including labor exploitation, to child protective services. (7,10) Through MoIA, registers cases of child exploitation identified by any government ministry. Through MoLHSA, assesses the child's condition, provides shelter and rehabilitation services to the child as needed, and monitors the child's case. (29)

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In 2019, the government adopted the Law on Occupational Safety, which empowers labor inspectors to enter any business for occupational health and safety reasons without prior notification and removes previous requirements that the MoLHSA's Department of Labor Inspection acquire a court order to inspect private businesses. (1,7,16,30) In addition, the government drafted a law on labor inspection that will make the labor inspectorate an independent legal entity and expand its mandate to include oversight of all labor rights, including those related to all forms of child labor. (30) Until this law is approved, however, labor inspectors will remain severely limited in their ability to conduct inspections and assess penalties on labor laws that are not related to occupational safety and health (OSH).

The regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not under the control of Georgian central authorities, who are prevented from carrying out inspections and law enforcement there. (14)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Georgia took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of MoLHSA that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$340,800 (10)	\$517,241 (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	40 (10)	40 (1,30)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	511 (10)	1,530 (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	511 (10)	1,530 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (10)	2 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (10)	2 (1)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (10)	2 (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (1,30)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (10)	Yes (1,30)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (1)

Beginning on September 1, 2019, the Law on Occupational Safety empowered labor inspectors to conduct OSH inspections on an unannounced basis in all industries and assess penalties for any hazardous child labor violations identified. During the reporting period, MoLHSA conducted 14 unannounced inspections under this authority. (1) The government reported that it targeted planned inspections to the mining and construction sectors, partially in response to a series of public reports on OSH violations and accidents. At least one such accident at a construction site involved a child. (9,30,31) Labor inspectors suspended work at two companies in which children were working in violation of prohibitions against hazardous child labor. (1) Although inspections took place throughout the country and in a range of economic sectors, no inspections were conducted in agriculture. (1)

In 2019, the government significantly increased the budget for the labor inspectorate compared to 2018, although sources note that further funding increases are needed to improve the inspectorate's capacity. (1) The government reported that it approved a twofold budget increase for the labor inspectorate in 2020. (30) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Georgia's workforce, which includes more than 1.9 million workers. (32) According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every

20,000 workers in transition economies, Georgia would employ about 100 labor inspectors. (33,34) However, the government has reported that it adopted a decree to increase the number of inspectors to 100 by the end of 2020. (30)

During the reporting period, labor inspectors received training on new labor laws from the ILO, IOM, and the German government's international development agency, GIZ. (1) New inspectors also received training on human trafficking from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) and the Georgian Ministry of Justice. (3)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, the government's criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (1)
Number of Investigations	7 (10)	6 (3)
Number of Violations Found	2 (10)	29 (1)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	2 (10)	4 (3)
Number of Convictions	2 (10)	2 (1)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	0 (35)	2 (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (1)

In 2019, the MoIA investigated one case of child labor exploitation, one case of child prostitution, two potential cases of forced begging, and two cases involving the production of child pornography. (1,3) Investigations in all of the forced begging and child pornography cases concluded during the reporting period and were referred to the Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution, and are ongoing. The other two investigations initiated in 2019, of child labor exploitation and child prostitution, respectively, are ongoing. (1,3) As a result of these investigations authorities identified 23 child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and 2 victims of forced begging. (1) Law enforcement agencies also identified four additional victims of forced begging based on an investigation initiated in 2018. All of these victims were referred to social services. (1) Authorities convicted two individuals on charges brought against them in 2018 related to their participation in the worst forms of child labor. Each individual received a 10-year prison sentence for forcing children to beg. (1)

Criminal investigators were unable to investigate and prosecute any potential human trafficking cases, including of children, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia because they remain occupied by Russian forces and are outside of central government control. (7,35)

In September, the MoIA increased the number of mobile law enforcement groups from four to six. These mobile groups operate in high-risk areas for human trafficking, and inspected 107 organizations during the reporting period. (3) Between January and October, the Social Services Agency provided services to 355 children in Tbilisi, Rustavi, and Kutaisi, and directed 248 of these children to crisis centers. (1) Criminal investigators, prosecutors, and judges participated in regular trainings and conferences on human trafficking throughout the year, including a Council of Europe conference on online child sexual exploitation and an IOM-facilitated training on child begging. (3)

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.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Agency Commission for the Implementation of the UN CRC	Monitors implementation of the Child Rights chapter of the National Human Rights Action Plan, which is based on provisions of the UN CRC. In 2019, drafted a strategy and action plan to end violence against children in Georgia, and a concept paper and plan to provide services to minors who are victims of violence. (1)
Inter-Agency Anti-Trafficking Coordination Council for the Implementation of Measures Against Human Trafficking	Coordinates government efforts against human trafficking, including efforts to protect and rehabilitate victims. (3) Refers child victims to shelters to receive social services. Chaired by the Minister of Justice and comprises representatives from state agencies and non-state entities. (3,7) In 2019, convened several meetings of its Working Group on Street Children. (1)
Prosecution Service of Georgia Working Group	Addresses labor trafficking issues under the framework of the Prosecution Service Strategy for 2017–2021. (10,36) Met four times in 2019 to discuss progress implementing the 1-year National Action Plan for 2019 to strengthen responses to labor exploitation. (1)

Reports indicated that in 2019 cooperation between MoLHSA's Labor Inspectorate and MoIA's Criminal Police Department increased, and that the Labor Inspectorate contacted MoIA immediately when it found criminal violations. However, the existing cooperation agreement between the Labor Inspectorate and the Criminal Police Department lacks clarity on their specific roles and functions and does not establish a common operating procedure. (7,11)

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 the scope of existing policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Human Rights Action Plan (2018–2020)	Includes a chapter on children's rights and lays out actions for government commitment toward developing a broad-based approach to fighting violence against children. (10,37) The government continued to implement this plan in 2019. (1)
National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (2019–2020)	Supports the development of policy and the implementation of activities to address human trafficking. Commits the government to protect and effectively integrate street children, through measures such as issuing identify documents and increasing school enrollment. (3,10,38,39) The government continued to implement this plan in 2019. (1,3)
Children's Rights Code†	Commits the government to establish or implement a range of measures aiming to protect children from violence and hazardous child labor. (1,21)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (10,40)

Although the government has established policies to address child begging, child trafficking, child labor in street work, and hazardous child labor, it does not have a policy to address child labor in agriculture.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating 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
Improved Compliance with Labor Laws in the Democratic Republic of Georgia	\$2 million USDOL-funded grant implemented by ILO to work with the Government of Georgia to improve its ability to enforce labor laws, including child labor laws, and adhere to international labor standards. Key objectives include supporting the establishment of adequate labor law enforcement mechanisms in Georgia through labor inspection and promoting effective tripartite cooperation. (41) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Targeted Social Assistance Program and Child Benefit Program‡	Social services agency-administered social assistance programs designed to eliminate poverty, especially child poverty. The Child Benefit Program is intended to halve extreme poverty among children, and covers about a quarter of the most vulnerable families with children. (42) In 2019, provided a variety of services, including shelters for homeless children, support for impoverished families, and daycare for vulnerable children. (1)

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

Program	Description
Social Rehabilitation and Childcare Program†	Provides assistance to children at high risk of abandonment and children with disabilities; places abandoned children in appropriate care. In 2019, received a budget of \$12.37 million. (1)
State Fund for Protection and Assistance of (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking†	MoLHSA program to protect, assist, and rehabilitate human trafficking and domestic violence victims, including minors. (29) Implements the government's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Strategy, which includes operating shelters for victims of human trafficking in Batumi and Tbilisi. (10) In 2019, recognized and provided services to two children who were victims of labor exploitation. (1)
Education-Focused Programs for Vulnerable Children†	Ministry of Education and Science-funded programs that promote the inclusion of vulnerable children in education. (10) Initiatives include a program designed to increase the participation in school by street children, victims of forced begging, and children who are seasonal agricultural workers; a program to increase the number of Georgian language teachers in communities with large ethnic minority populations; and a program to distribute free textbooks to public school students. (10,43) In 2019, the government continued to fund inclusive education and allocated money to develop or renovate the infrastructure of education facilities. (1)

† Program is funded by the Government of Georgia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (7,10,44)

During the reporting period, the government conducted regular awareness-raising campaigns related to trafficking in persons. (3) Although Georgia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially regarding street children. (1,45)

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 Georgia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those in informal work.	2017 – 2019
	Increase the age up to which education is compulsory to age 16, the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2019
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of children for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2019
Enforcement	Ensure that legislation permits the Department of Labor Inspection within the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Affairs to conduct targeted, complaint-based, and unannounced inspections related to all labor laws and empowers inspectors to assess penalties for all violations detected.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that inspections are conducted in all economic sectors in which child labor violations may be present, including agriculture.	2019
	Ensure that the Department of Labor Inspection within the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Affairs has funding to employ a sufficient number of inspectors and that inspectors are capable of performing quality targeted, complaint-based, and unannounced inspections in all sectors and businesses on all labor laws.	2009 – 2019
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to monitor and combat child labor.	2018 – 2019
	Continue to increase coordination between the Department of Labor Inspection within the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Affairs and the Criminal Police Department.	2018 – 2019
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant forms of child labor, including child labor in agriculture.	2017 – 2019
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, including in agriculture, to inform policies and programs.	2018 – 2019
	Make additional efforts to register children from Roma communities and provide them with identity documents, and ensure that these groups can access education.	2018 – 2019
	Ensure that socially vulnerable children, children from impoverished families, and children who live in rural areas have access to education.	2019
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, especially for street children.	2018 – 2019

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