

In 2019, Mali made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government allocated \$350,000 to anti-trafficking efforts, including training judges, prosecutors, police, and civil society members on Mali's anti-trafficking law. The government also published data on enforcement efforts, including the number of labor inspections conducted and violations identified, in addition to drafting two new laws that increase penalties for trafficking crimes and exploitation of migrant children. In addition, the government published a new mining code that prohibits the use of child labor in artisanal mining. However, children in Mali engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in hereditary slavery and in armed conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in the production of cotton and rice. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas, the Malian Armed Forces also recruited and used 24 children ages 9 to 16 in support roles for at least 2 years, in violation of its national law. Although the children were released in November 2019 following high-level engagement, there is no evidence that government officials were sanctioned for the recruitment and use of the children. Further, Mali's law only prohibits hereditary slavery as a result of human trafficking, does not explicitly prohibit using, procuring, or offering children for illicit activities, and allows children under age 18 to be penalized as a direct result of forced recruitment by armed groups. In addition, resource constraints severely limited the government's ability to fully implement the National Plan to Combat Child Labor, and social and rehabilitation services for victims of the worst forms of child labor are inadequate.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mali engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in hereditary slavery and in armed conflict. (1-6) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in the production of cotton and rice. (2,4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mali.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Working (% and population) | 5 to 14 | 49.2 (Unavailable) |
| Attending School (%) | 5 to 14 | 43.3 |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7 to 14 | 26.0 |
| Primary Completion Rate (%) | | 49.6 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (7)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2015. (8)

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,† harvesting,† ginning,† transporting,† and applying chemical fertilizers,† particularly in the production of cotton and rice (4,9,10) |
| | Raising livestock,† including oxen and small ruminants (9,11,12) |
| | Fishing† (9,11) |
| Industry | Artisanal gold mining,† including digging shafts,† extracting ore from underground tunnels,† crushing ore,† and amalgamating ore with mercury† (2,4,13-16) |
| | Assembling fishing canoes† (9) |

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

| Sector/Industry | Activity |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Services | Domestic work† (2,4,17,18) |
| | Street work,† including as market vendors,† beggars,† and in the transportation sector (2,9,18,19) |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Forced labor in artisanal mining, domestic work, street work, production of salt, and farming, including in the production of rice, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,20-22) |
| | Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,23-26) |
| | Forced recruitment by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (4-6,27,28) |
| | Hereditary slavery (1,4,18,23,30) |
| | Forced begging by Koranic teachers, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,4,13,23) |

† 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.

Children, especially of the Bellah community (also known as black Tuaregs), are subject to hereditary slavery in northern and southwestern Mali. (1,4,18,30,31) Some children are born into slavery, while others are born free, but remain in dependent status through which they, along with their parents, are forced to work for their parents’ former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. Child slaves perform agricultural or domestic labor and are often sexually abused. (31,32) In addition, children, particularly those of Songhai ethnicity, work in debt bondage in the northern salt mines of Taoudenni. (31,33) In 2019, the Malian National Commission on Human Rights identified 125 displaced child slaves from the southwestern region of Mali. (4)

Children involved in artisanal gold mining in western and southern Mali are exposed to toxic substances and extreme temperatures, transport heavy loads, and work long hours. (4,13-16) Some boys placed in the care of Koranic teachers for education are forced by their teachers to beg on the street or to work in fields, after which they must surrender the money they have earned to their teachers. (4,13, 31,33)

Intermittent fighting and violence in central and northern Mali continued in 2019, resulting in the killing and displacement of children. (34,35) Children continued to be forcibly recruited and trained by non-state armed groups, including the Coordination of Movements for Azawad, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, the High Council for the Unity of Azawad, the Arab Movement of Azawad, and Tuareg Imghad and Allies Self-Defense Group (GATIA), all signatories of the 2015 Peace Accord. (5, 28,34,36)

During the reporting period, the Directorate for the Promotion of Children and Family within the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and Family reported identifying 62 cases of children used by armed groups. The Directorate for the Promotion of Children and Family reported that 32 of the 62 children removed from armed groups were reunited with their families. (4) UNICEF also reported identifying at least 39 cases of child soldiers, and other cases of forced recruitment of child soldiers during the reporting period are being confirmed. (4,34,36)

Although the Constitution guarantees free and compulsory education, many children, especially girls, do not attend school because parents are expected to pay fees for registration, uniforms, books, and materials, which are prohibitive for many impoverished families. (2,4,18,33,37,38,57) Many children in Mali are not registered at birth, which may prevent them from accessing services such as education. (2,4,33,39,40) In addition, evidence suggests that incidences of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, including corporal punishment, prevent some children from remaining in school. (18,33,41)

In 2019, numerous attacks on schools in northern Mali resulted in lootings, destruction of learning materials and infrastructure, and occupancy of school facilities by armed groups. (4,27,42) A total of 1,217 schools in conflict-affected zones remained closed throughout the reporting period, as many teachers and students remained displaced. (4,42-44) In addition, between December 2018 and May 2019, the majority of primary and secondary school teachers throughout the country went on a series of non-continuous strikes causing many more schools to close. The Ministry of Education extended classes until July 2019 to salvage the school year. (45,46) The lack of access to education and lack of teacher availability may increase the risk of children’s involvement in the worst forms of child labor. (4,47)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mali 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 Mali's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment by non-state armed groups and use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

| Standard | Meets International Standards | Age | Legislation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 15 | Article L.187 of the Law 2017-021 modifying the Labor Code (48) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Hazardous Occupations List; Article I of the 2017-4388 Amendment to Hazardous Occupations List; Article D.189.14 of the Labor Code (49-51) |
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | Yes | | Hazardous Occupations List; Article I of the 2017-4388 Amendment to Hazardous Occupations List; Article 189 of the Labor Code (49-51) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | No | | Article L.6 of the Law 2017-021 modifying the Labor Code; Article I of the Trafficking in Persons Law (48,52) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes | | Article 244 of the Penal Code; Article 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 63 of the Child Protection Code (52-54) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes | | Article 228 of the Penal Code; Articles I and 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 57 of the Child Protection Code (52-54) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | No | | Article 183 of the Penal Code; Articles 18 and 50 of the Child Protection Code (53,54) |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment | Yes | 18 | Article 17 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 31.23 and 31.31 of the Penal Code; Article 5 of the Military General Statute (53-55) |
| Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military | Yes | | Article 17 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 31.23 and 31.31 of the Penal Code; Article 5 of the Military General Statute (53-55) |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups | No | | Articles 31.23, 31.31, and 32 of the Penal Code (53) |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 15‡ | Articles 26 and 34 of the Law of Education (56) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Article 18 of the Constitution (57) |

‡ Age calculated based on available information (53)

Articles 189.35 and 189.36 of the Labor Code allow children between the ages of 12 and 14 to perform domestic or light seasonal work, as long as it does not impede school attendance or exceed 4.5 hours of work per day. (49) The light work framework does not meet international standards as it applies to children under the age of 13. Additionally, the law does not specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken. (48,58,109)

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Although Mali's Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes trafficking for the purpose of slavery, it does not more broadly criminalize the act of slavery and Mali's labor code, while prohibiting forced labor generally, does not specifically prohibit hereditary slavery. In addition, Malian law does not prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs as established by international standards. (1,2,24,52,54)

The Child Protection Code provides protection for children under age 18, and the Penal Code establishes criminal penalties for several of the worst forms of child labor. (13,53,54) However, some offenses included in the Child Protection Code do not have criminal penalties, such as the prohibition of military recruitment by non-state armed groups. (53,54) Although the Child Protection Code prohibits children under age 18 from participating in armed conflicts or joining the armed forces, it only provides for imprisonment of perpetrators in the case of repeat offenses. Meanwhile, the Penal Code only provides criminal penalties if the children are under age 15. (53,54,59)

Article 28 of the Penal Code states that crimes committed out of self-defense or under a force that could not be resisted should not be penalized as prescribed by the Penal Code. Although an Inter-Ministerial Circular on the Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers states that Article 28 of the Penal Code is applicable to children involved in armed conflict, the Circular does not define the age range of the children it covers. (53,60) This means that some children under age 18 who are affiliated with non-state armed groups may be penalized as a direct result of being a victim of the worst forms of child labor. (53,60)

In 2019, the government began working on several new laws and amendments that would strengthen protections for children. The government published a new mining code which prohibits child labor in traditional mines and drafted a new law on migrant smuggling which will carry increased penalties for the exploitation of migrant children. (4,34,61-63) The Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with UNODC, revised the 2012 Anti-Trafficking Law to provide aggravated penalties if trafficking is committed against a child under the age of 18 when previously aggravated penalties were only applied if the child was under 15 years of age. However, and the drafts of the migrant smuggling law and anti-trafficking law are pending government approval. (4,34,61)

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 National Directorate of Labor | Enforces labor laws and investigates Labor Code infractions, including those regarding child labor. (33,64,65) |
| National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE) | Coordinates Mali's efforts to eliminate child labor, especially its worst forms. Chaired by the Ministry of Labor and includes representatives from other government ministries, civil society, and worker and employer organizations. (2,24,66,67) One labor inspector in each region is designated as the point of contact for CNLTE to facilitate regional coordination, and CNLTE also had 14 dedicated child labor inspectors as well as a budget of \$84,600 for the reporting period. (2,4,68) In 2019, CNLTE carried out awareness-raising activities and organized capacity building for community leaders and government officials, including a capacity-building activity that targeted sugar cane producers due to evidence of child labor in that sector collected by CNLTE. (4) |
| Ministry of Justice | Initiates and coordinates with courts the implementation of laws related to the worst forms of child labor with the support of several other ministries, including the Ministries of Security, Territorial Administration, Child Promotion, Defense, and Labor. (4, 31,64) |
| Ministry of Internal Security's Police Brigade for the Protection of Morals and Children (BPMC) | Investigates crimes against children, including human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (2,4,23) In 2019, BPMC reported that a new Brigade to Fight Clandestine Immigration and Human trafficking was created to focus exclusively on transnational trafficking. (4,34) |
| Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family (MPFEF) | 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. (4,37,64,65) |

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Mali 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 insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

| Overview of Labor Law Enforcement | 2018 | 2019 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Labor Inspectorate Funding | \$70,000 (68) | \$85,000 (4) |
| Number of Labor Inspectors | 109 (68) | 113 (4) |
| Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties | Yes (68) | Yes (4,49) |
| Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors | Yes (68) | Yes (4) |
| Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor | No (68) | Yes (4) |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Yes (68) | Yes (4) |
| Number of Labor Inspections Conducted | Unknown (68) | 671 (4) |
| Number Conducted at Worksite | Unknown (68) | 671 (4) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found | Unknown (68) | Unknown (4) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed | Unknown (68) | Unknown (4) |
| Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected | Unknown (68) | Unknown (4) |
| Routine Inspections Conducted | Unknown (68) | Yes (4) |
| Routine Inspections Targeted | Unknown (68) | Yes (4) |
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted | Yes (68) | Yes (4) |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted | Unknown (68) | Yes (4) |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists | Yes (68) | Yes (4) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | Yes (68) | Yes (4) |

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Mali's workforce, which includes approximately 6.5 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed countries, Mali would employ about 161 inspectors. (68-71) Although all regions have labor inspectors, government services are limited or non-existent in some areas due to the insecurity caused by the presence of non-state armed groups. (2,4,68) In addition, reports indicate that a lack of trained staff, equipment, transportation, and funding hampered both the National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE) and the labor inspectorate's ability to conduct child labor inspections and legal proceedings, especially in remote areas of northern Mali. (4,33,58,68,72)

During the reporting period, the government increased the National Directorate of Labor's budget by approximately \$100,000 compared to 2018, which led to an increase of \$15,000 for the labor inspectorate. The labor inspectorate conducted 671 inspections in 2019 and identified 13,772 labor law violations. (4) The CNLTE also reported that it conducted labor inspections on private farms, where children are more likely to be involved in child labor. In addition, the Brigade for the Protection of Morals and Children (BPMC) reported identifying five victims of child labor and investigated an additional four cases of child domestic workers, but the reported number of child labor victims is likely lower than the actual number of victims given the widespread nature of child labor and inadequate enforcement of child labor laws in Mali. (4) However, the government did not provide the number of child labor violations found, the number of penalties imposed, or the number of penalties imposed that were collected during the year for inclusion in this report.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mali 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 insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement | 2018 | 2019 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators | Unknown (68) | Yes (4) |
| Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor | Unknown (68) | Unknown (4) |
| Refresher Courses Provided | Unknown (68) | Yes (4) |
| Number of Investigations | 1 (68) | 2 (4) |
| Number of Violations Found | 3 (68) | 46 (4,34) |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated | 1 (68) | 2 (4) |
| Number of Convictions | 1 (68) | 0 (4) |
| Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor | Yes (2) | Unknown (4) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | Yes (68) | Yes (4) |

In 2019, the BPMC employed 25 staff, 3 fewer than in 2018. In addition, the BPMC noted that many of its expert staff members were transferred to the newly created Brigade to Fight Clandestine Immigration and Human Trafficking, and the BPMC received newer police officers. (4,68) According to the BPMC, the number of law enforcement agents is inadequate given the prevalence of the worst forms of child labor in the country. However, the BPMC reported that the government plans to increase its personnel in 2020. (4)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Justice conducted anti-trafficking trainings for government officials and community leaders in Gao, Timbuktu, and artisanal gold mining areas. In addition, the Government of Mali provided \$100,000 in funding to NGOs to conduct anti-trafficking trainings in artisanal gold mining areas. (34) The trainings educated 400 stakeholders on the national anti-trafficking law and on victim identification and referral in local languages. (34)

Despite these efforts to increase training and resources, research found that the Government of Mali lacks trained staff, equipment, transportation, and funding to adequately conduct criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, particularly in remote areas. (4,31,68,73) Reports indicate that because of political instability, which may hinder labor and criminal law enforcement efforts in northern Mali, the prevalence of hereditary slavery, forced labor, and trafficking in persons has worsened since the conflict began in 2012. (4,31,33,68,74)

In 2019, the BPMC arrested two Koranic teachers who were perpetrators of forced child begging and who exploited five children between the ages of 5 and 10. (4,34) The Ministry of Justice also reported that there were at least 33 new trafficking in persons cases under investigation and pending trials, and at least 30 additional cases relating to hereditary slavery were either investigated or prosecuted during the reporting period. However, in both cases, it is unknown whether any victims were children. (34) In addition, many justice sector actors noted government officials' interference in cases involving slavery-related practices in an effort to have the charges dismissed. (34)

During the reporting period, a Malian NGO reported that a total of 106 trafficking victims were assisted in collaboration with the government. This included a Malian female child victim of sex trafficking identified in Senegal who was repatriated to Mali, 28 foreign national children identified in Mali and repatriated to their countries of origin, and 13 Malian children who were identified as internal victims of migrant smuggling and trafficking. (34)

Research identified that a general in the Malian Armed Forces is also leading GATIA, a pro-government armed group. Research found evidence that the government provided in-kind support to GATIA, which forcibly recruited and used children in armed conflict during the reporting period. (2, 20,31,34,36,75-77) In 2019, it was discovered that Malian army officials recruited and used 24 children between the ages of 9 and 16 to work in domestic support roles for at least 2 years in exchange for food. The children were eventually released in November 2019 after repeated high-level engagement by the UN and international governments. (4,20,34,36,75-79) However, in both cases, it is unknown whether the government prosecuted perpetrators or sanctioned government officials for forced recruitment and use in support roles of children in armed conflict.

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 lack of clarity about the roles of coordinating bodies.

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

| Coordinating Body | Role & Description |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices | Coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Justice and includes various government agencies and civil society groups. (2,23,80,81) In 2019, the committee trained judges, prosecutors, police, and civil society leaders on Mali's anti-trafficking law. (4,34,82) |
| Inter-Ministerial Committee to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children | Led by MPFEF, conducts awareness-raising campaigns to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and implements reintegration programs for former child soldiers. (2) Conducts joint missions with international partners to determine the presence of children in armed conflict. (64) Committee was active in 2019 and assisted in identifying children forcibly recruited by non-state armed groups. (4,34,78) |
| Artisanal Gold Mining Summit Committee | Comprising gold mining associations and local government officials that monitor the recommendations from a 2014 summit on artisanal mining, including the ban on child labor in artisanal gold mines. (83,84) Committee was active in 2019. (4) |

Reports indicate that there is confusion with regard to roles and a lack of coordination between the CNLTE and the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices. (28,31,74)

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 insufficient funding and ineffective implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

| Policy | Description |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Plan to Combat Child Labor (PANETEM) (2011–2020) | Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by strengthening child labor laws, training relevant government officials, and mobilizing funds for social programs to withdraw children from child labor. Implemented by CNLTE. (9,58,84) In 2019, the government continued to work on PANETEM; however, CNLTE reported that there is a lack of funding to implement PANETEM and no resources to evaluate its progress. (4,68) |
| National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2018–2022) | Aims to enhance the legal framework to prevent human trafficking, improve implementation of the laws, and provide effective protection and care for victims. Led by the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices. (4,31,85) Calls for the establishment of a formal body to coordinate government efforts to combat trafficking in persons and allocates a budget of \$10 million for the 5 year period or \$2 million per year. The government has pledged to contribute \$350,000 annually and intends to mobilize development partners and the private sector to provide the remaining financial support needed to implement the plan. (28) In 2019, the government established the Brigade to Fight Clandestine Immigration and Human Trafficking. (34,82) |
| National Policy for Promotion and Protection of Children (2015–2019) | Aimed to protect children from abuse, violence, and exploitation and promoted improved access to education and livelihood services for vulnerable children, especially those affected by armed conflict. Overseen by MPFEF. (2,86) The Government of Mali and NGO partners reported identifying and assisting 215 child soldiers during the reporting period. (4,34) |
| Inter-Ministerial Circular and the Protocol on the Release and Transfer of Children Associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces | Provides a framework that highlights the responsibility of the government to prevent children's involvement in armed conflict, and protect and reintegrate those children who become involved. (2,5,36,87) In 2019, after high-level engagement, the government interceded on behalf of 24 children identified by the UN as operating in domestic roles with the Malian Armed Forces in Gao. UNICEF is providing the children with psychosocial and reintegration support. (82) |
| National Strategic Education Sector Plan (2017–2026) | Sets out a comprehensive map to improve the quality of and access to basic and secondary education, especially in conflict-affected areas of northern Mali. Led by the Ministry of Education and supported by international donors. (58,64,88) In 2019, the government of Mali allocated \$608,162 to fund education. (82) |

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (2,4,89-93)

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VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

| Program | Description |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ILO-Implemented Projects to Combat Child Labor | ILO-implemented projects to combat child labor and forced labor in supply chains. These projects include the Clear Cotton Project on Child and Forced Labor (2019–2022), an \$8.5 million EU and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations-funded global project to combat child labor and forced labor in cotton and textile supply chains, and ACCEL Africa, a \$26.5 million Government of Netherlands-funded regional project to combat child labor in gold mining and cotton supply chains. (68,94-96) Projects were active during the reporting year. (4) |
| USDOS-Funded Projects to Combat Descent-Based Slavery* | USDOS-funded programs implemented by the American Bar Association and ILO to combat hereditary slavery and forced child labor in Mali. (3,34,82,97) In 2019, the American Bar Association program trained 27 representatives of the Malian justice sector in victim-centric approaches to investigating and prosecuting cases involving slavery. (34) |
| National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Program | \$25 million UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali-implemented program that aims to provide reintegration services to former combatants in Mali, including children. (2,87,98) In 2019, provided reintegration services to 39 child soldiers. (4) In addition, provided \$246,000 to improve BPMC's headquarters, to provide adequate facilities for BPMC to receive child victims, and to hold a workshop for officers on techniques to assist and rehabilitate former child soldiers. (99) |
| Global Action Against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT) | \$13 million EU-funded, global project implemented by UNODC, UNICEF, and IOM to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling. (100,101) In 2019, Malian officials attended a regional GLO.ACT training to enhance cooperation to combat transnational trafficking in Mali, Niger, and Morocco. (102) |
| USAID Country Program (2016–2020) | \$600 million USAID-funded program that supports the government's efforts to improve education, food security, and health; and to provide humanitarian assistance in crisis areas. In 2019, provided quality basic and secondary education to vulnerable communities in northern Mali, including by re-opening schools, training teachers, and providing school kits for students. (4,68,103) |

* Program was launched during the reporting period. (4)

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (2,4,104-107)

Mali does not fund or participate in programs to address child labor in domestic work, forced begging, or commercial sexual exploitation. (108)

An informal referral mechanism exists among NGOs, UN bodies, police, and other government agencies to allow withdrawal of children from armed conflict and provide social services to victims of the worst forms of child labor. (4,28,68) Despite these efforts, reports indicate that resources and facilities available to social services agencies are inadequate. (4,31,33,68)

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 Mali (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Legal Framework | Ensure that the law criminally prohibits hereditary slavery in addition to other forms of forced labor. | 2017 – 2019 |
| | Criminally prohibit the use, procurement, or offering of children for the production and trafficking of drugs. | 2009 – 2019 |
| | Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups and in any armed conflict. | 2013 – 2019 |
| | Ensure that the Labor Code establishes a minimum age no younger than age 13 for light work and specifies the conditions under which light work may be undertaken. | 2015 – 2019 |
| | Ensure that the specific ages of children protected by the Inter-Ministerial Circular on the Prevention, Protection, and Reintegration of Children in Armed Conflict comply with international standards, and ensure that children under age 18 are not penalized as a result of being subjected to forced recruitment. | 2009 – 2019 |

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

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Enforcement | Publish information on enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations found, child labor penalties imposed and collected, training on new laws related to the worst forms of child labor, and number of penalties imposed for the worst forms of child labor. | 2010 – 2019 |
| | Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice. | 2012 – 2019 |
| | Increase labor inspectorate funding and resources, including equipment and transportation to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of northern Mali. | 2012 – 2019 |
| | Ensure that enforcement officials throughout the country receive additional training, transportation, and equipment necessary to adequately enforce laws related to child labor, including its worst forms. | 2019 |
| | Ensure that perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor, including government officials, are prosecuted in accordance with the law. | 2013 – 2019 |
| | Implement the provisions of the Inter-Ministerial Circular and the UN-signed Protocol, which require that children in detention for their association with armed groups be transferred to social services or to UN child protection actors for appropriate reintegration and social protection services. | 2013 – 2019 |
| | Ensure that government officials are sanctioned and held accountable for interference in legal cases related to crimes of the worst forms of child labor, including in cases of slavery and the recruitment and use of child soldiers. | 2019 |
| Coordination | Clarify roles for coordinating mechanisms combating child labor and improve coordination among relevant agencies. | 2010 – 2019 |
| | Ensure that coordinating mechanisms receive sufficient resources to coordinate efforts to address child labor. | 2012 – 2019 |
| Government Policies | Ensure that the National Plan to Combat Child Labor is implemented, including by allocating sufficient financial and human resources. | 2012 – 2019 |
| Social Programs | Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including girls and those living in conflict-affected areas, by removing school-related fees, increasing school infrastructure, increasing teacher availability, providing school supplies, and taking measures to ensure the safety of children and teachers in schools. | 2010 – 2019 |
| | Increase birth registration rates to ensure that children have access to social services, including education. | 2010 – 2019 |
| | Ensure that the military and non-state armed groups do not occupy schools. | 2018 – 2019 |
| | Ensure that government social services have sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care for victims of the worst forms of child labor, including for children used in armed conflict. | 2016 – 2019 |
| | Institute new programs to address child labor in all relevant sectors, including domestic work, forced begging, and commercial sexual exploitation. | 2009 – 2019 |

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