

In 2019, Mauritania made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Unlike previous years when the government did not adequately prosecute or secure convictions in slavery cases, the government investigated, prosecuted, and convicted 12 perpetrators in 3 cases of slavery during the reporting period. In addition, it created and funded a new agency, Taazour, to assist vulnerable populations, including communities of slave descent. The government also revised laws on trafficking in persons and eased requirements for registering non-governmental organizations. However, despite making meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, Mauritania is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because it continued to implement a policy and a practice that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Although there were indications of progress, criminal law enforcement authorities did not make adequate efforts to combat slavery and its vestiges during the reporting period. Specifically, prosecution and convictions in slavery cases are isolated, and reports continue to indicate that some government actors, including police and judicial authorities, are unwilling to pursue such cases. In addition, since 2011, the government has required proof of marriage and biological parents' citizenship for children to obtain a birth certificate. As a result, children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and Sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including those of slave descent, have been prevented from being registered at birth. Because birth certificates are required for enrollment in secondary school in Mauritania, children as young as age 12 cannot access education, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Children in Mauritania engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in herding cattle and goats. The government did not make sufficient efforts to enforce some laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including laws on hereditary slavery. In addition, lack of financial resources severely limited the government's ability to fully implement policies, and social programs to combat the worst forms of child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.



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I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritania engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery. (1-4) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in herding cattle and goats. (1,5-7) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritania.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	19.7 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	15.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		76.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020.(8)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2015 (MICS), 2015. (9)

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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Herding and caring for cattle, camels, goats, and sheep (1,5-7,10-13)
	Fishing for shrimp and fish (1,6,7,11-13)
Industry	Crushing gravel (11,14)
Services	Domestic work (1,5-7,15-17)
	Working as car mechanics, painters, and carpenters (1,6,7,13)
	Garbage scavenging (1,7,13)
	Street work, including vending, shoe shining, begging, [†] and in the transportation sector (1,6,7,11,13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Forced begging as a result of criminal gang recruitment and coercion by Koranic teachers (1,6,12,16-18)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,7)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (4,7,13,19)
	Indentured and hereditary slavery (1-3,10,15,18-23)
	Forced labor in domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6,13,19)

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

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

Children in Mauritania, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, continue to be exploited as slaves and endure slave-like practices, particularly in rural and remote areas of the country. Some children are born into slavery; others are born free but remain in a dependent status and are forced to work with their parents for their former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. (3,4,6,7,21-25) Child slaves herd animals such as cattle and goats, perform domestic labor, and are often sexually exploited. (3,4,14,15,26)

In Mauritania, it is a traditional practice to send children to Koranic teachers to receive an education. However, some Koranic teachers (*marabouts*) force their students (*talibés*) to beg on the streets for long hours and to surrender the money they have earned. (4-7,12,17-19)

Since 2011, the Government of Mauritania has required proof of marriage and a copy of the national identity cards of the parents or caregivers to obtain a birth certificate. This may have prevented children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and Sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including from families of slave descent, from being registered at birth. (27,28) In addition, Ministry of Education officials report that an April 2016 decree requiring all children to have a national identity card to take part in national examinations to obtain the Certificate of Primary Education Studies (CEP) has not been applied systematically; however, the decree has not been withdrawn, and this continues to leave room for different interpretations. Because both birth certificates and the CEP are required to enroll in secondary school in Mauritania, many children as young as age 12 cannot access secondary education, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (7,10,13,18,24,25,28-31) In addition, the lack of school infrastructure and limited availability of teachers, especially in rural areas, impede access to education, which may increase children’s vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (21,32-34) Children from families of slave descent, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, also face barriers to accessing education due to ethnic discrimination. (5,10,22,24,35)

Although all families are required to register children for birth certificates, there are reports that the civil registration process, including obtaining birth certificates, is confusing and time consuming. Moreover, applicants have faced additional hardship due to the closure of registration centers outside the capital and lack of training for registration center staff. (27,28,36,37) In 2019, the government began providing birth registration to children from a preliminary list of 30,000 unregistered children, including refugees and children of slave descent. The government has not published the total number of registrations issued during the reporting period. (38-40) The Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family (MASEF) and the National Child Protection Council have representation in all regions in Mauritania, and are mandated to identify cases of citizens, including children, who are unable to register and provide them the support needed to complete the registration process. (40) In addition, the government appointed a special committee, headed by a presidential adviser, to review cases of

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unregistered applicants and facilitate documentation processes for marginalized and vulnerable communities. As part of the committee’s efforts to facilitate documentation processes, they have conducted site visits to civil registration centers during which they have provided support to individuals who have encountered difficulty in the civil registration process. (39,40)

In 2019, Mauritania hosted approximately 57,000 Malian refugees. During the reporting period, the Government of Mauritania, in collaboration with the UNHCR, continued to issue birth certificates to approximately 2,000 Malian refugee children. (12,17,41,42) Refugee children may have difficulty accessing education, which makes them particularly vulnerable to engaging in the worst forms of child labor, including being recruited by non-state armed groups. (4,12,30,43,44)

In 2019, Mohamed Ghazouani was sworn in as President of Mauritania, and his new administration has prioritized combating poverty, exclusion, and marginalization. Under the current administration, experts have highlighted that Mauritania has made some progress in addressing human rights issues, including investigating and prosecuting cases of slavery and trafficking in persons; however, some government officials have expressed a continued unwillingness to address allegations of human trafficking and slavery. (17,19,45,46)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mauritania has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mauritania’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 76 of the General Child Protection Code (37)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 247 of the Labor Code (47)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 76–77 of the General Child Protection Code (37)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Law 052/2015; Articles 1 and 3–4 of Law 025/2003; Article 1 of Law 2013-011 (48-50)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1 and 3 of Law 025/2003; Article 54 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (48,51)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 1 of Law 025/2003; Articles 24–26 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (48,51)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3–5 and 14 of Law 93-37 on the Prohibition of Production, Trafficking, and Use of Drugs and Illicit Substances; Article 42 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (51,52)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of Law 62132/1962 (53)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 43 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (51)
Compulsory Education Age	No	14	Article 1 of Law 2001-054 (54)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 1 of Law 2001-054 (54)

* No conscription (55)

During the reporting period, the government drafted a new law regulating NGOs that eases registration requirements and moves oversight of NGOs from the Ministry of the Interior to the Commissariat for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Relations with Civil Society. (58,59) The government also began rewriting laws related to trafficking in persons to provide increased legal protections against forced labor. (17,56-60) As part of this process, the Ministry of Justice collaborated with IOM on several workshops to solicit input from governmental and civil society organizations to revise the legislative framework concerning human trafficking. The draft law significantly reinforces victims’ rights, including a right to reparations. (17,40,61)

The General Child Protection Code, enacted in 2018, allows children ages 16 and 17 to work as long as work is not performed at night, does not exceed 8 hours per day, and does not impede school attendance. In addition, the Code prohibits the employment of children in work that exposes them to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools; and work in unhealthy environments, which may expose children to hazardous substances or temperatures. (37) The Code also criminalizes the commercial sexual exploitation of children and forced begging, and provides penalties for violations of child labor laws up to \$41,000 and 20 years’ imprisonment for the commission of child trafficking crimes. (13,37,62,63) However, the Code does not determine the types of work that are hazardous, including domestic work, an area in which there is evidence of children carrying heavy loads and working long hours. (6,37) In 2019, the government began to develop a new hazardous work list. The new list, which is expected to include domestic work, is slated to be finalized in 2020. (12,39)

The Labor Code allows children ages 12 and older to perform light work, as long as it does not impede their school attendance, does not exceed 2 hours per day, and is authorized by the Ministry of Labor. (47) However, the Labor Code does not specify the activities in which light work may be permitted. (64) In addition, children in Mauritania are required to attend school only up to age 14. This standard makes children ages 14 through 16 vulnerable to child labor, because they are not required to attend school but are not legally allowed to work. (37,54)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor's Directorate of Labor and Inspection	Enforces labor laws and investigates Labor Code infractions, including violations related to minimum wage and hazardous work. (16,65,66)
Ministry of the Interior's Special Brigade for Minors	Investigates crimes against children, including human trafficking, and monitors religious schools (<i>mahadras</i>) to ensure that children are not forced to beg on behalf of their teachers. Mainly operates in Nouakchott. (7,16,35,67,68)
Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family (MASEF) Office of Childhood	Develops and implements programs to protect vulnerable children and monitor alleged violations of child labor laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Manages the Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children. (7,16,65)
Ministry of Justice's Directorate of the Judiciary for the Protection of Children	Coordinates child protection issues and oversees tribunals responsible for sentencing child offenders. (14,16)
Anti-Slavery Courts	Prosecute crimes related to slavery and provide free legal assistance to victims, including children. The three regional courts located in Nema, Nouakchott, and Nouadhibou were created under the Roadmap and Action Plan for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery. (4,69-71)
Commissariat on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action	Coordinates the development and implementation of government policies related to human rights, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (4,65,72,73) Carries out awareness-raising campaigns to combat slavery and human trafficking and acts as a civil party to victims of slavery in filing cases. Semi-autonomous body, under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister. (4,65,72,73) As part of the new government's restructuring, the National Agency to Combat the Vestiges of Slavery, Integration, and Fight Against Poverty's (<i>Tadamoun</i>) mandate to act as civil party on behalf of victims of slavery has been transferred to the Commissariat on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action. (12,39,74) In 2019, the Commissariat, working with an IOM-funded consultant, drafted a new National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons that addresses USG recommendations. Government approval of the plan is expected in early 2020. (17)
National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH)	Independent ombudsman body. Advocates for the eradication of slavery, receives human rights complaints, and conducts investigations on human rights violations, including the worst forms of child labor. (7,16,19,35) In 2019, the government funded the CNDH's nationwide outreach caravan to raise awareness in rural and marginalized communities on their rights and legal protections, and how to identify cases of slavery-like practices. (12,19,56)

In 2019, the Ministry of Justice, in coordination with the MASEF, set up a rehabilitation center for victims of slavery to reinstate their full civil rights and liberties. (12)

Labor Law Enforcement

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

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$33,300 (75)	\$33,300 (12)
Number of Labor Inspectors	67 (75,76)	127 (12)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (76,77)	No (12)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (76)	Yes (12)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown (76,78)	Yes (12,39)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (76)	Yes (12)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (76)	Unknown (12)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (76)	Unknown (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (76)	Unknown (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (76)	Unknown (12)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (76)	Unknown (12)
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (76)	No (12)
Routine Inspections Targeted	N/A (76)	N/A (12)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (76)	Yes (12)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	7 (76)	No (39)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (76)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (76)	Yes (12)

In 2019, labor inspectors did not receive training on the General Child Protection Code. (12,37,75,76) In addition, reports indicate that the Ministry of Labor lacked equipment, training, transportation, and funding to conduct child labor inspections, especially in remote locations and in the informal sector, which employs more than 40 percent of the workforce. (12,13,16,34,65,68,79,80) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor hired and trained 60 more labor inspectors to expand coverage across the country and across sectors. (12,39)

Labor inspectors prepare reports when they find a labor violation and may include a recommendation for a penalty; however, they must file the reports with the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice will then assess the penalty for the labor violation. (12,78) However, the penalties established for violating child labor laws are insufficient and do not generally deter violations. (14,81)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritania took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases related to hereditary slavery.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (76)	Yes (12)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (76)	Yes (12)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (38)	Yes (12)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (76)	3 (12)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (76)	3 (12)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (76)	8 (12,19,82)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (76)	5 (12)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (76)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (76)	Yes (12)

During the reporting period, the Special Brigade for Minors continued to employ 3 officers. (12) According to international organizations and NGOs, there is little to no coordination among enforcement agencies. (76,78) Efforts made by criminal law enforcement authorities to combat the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery, remained inadequate given the magnitude of the problem. (4) In addition, Mauritanian judicial officials often dismiss or fail to refer cases to the Anti-Slavery Courts due to a lack of training. (38,79)

In November 2019, the Anti-Slavery Court of Nema judged 3 separate cases that included a total of 12 perpetrators and approximately 15 victims. The court sentenced the 12 perpetrators to serve 5 to 15 years in prison and awarded the victims in each case \$135,000 as a group. (12,82) Although the 12 convicted had fled to Mali prior to their prosecution, the Ministry of Justice issued international warrants for their arrest and is working with The International Criminal Police Organization to seek their extradition to Mauritania. (12,82) An additional case involving a young female victim of slavery is currently under prosecution at the Anti-Slavery Court of Nouakchott and has drawn widespread attention due to a perceived lack of action by some judicial officials. However, both the Commissariat on Human Rights and the Nouakchott Public Prosecutor have taken a proactive role in managing the case. (17,83,84) During the reporting period, there were two additional cases of slavery

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investigated or prosecuted by the Nema Anti-Slavery Court. In addition, the Federal Public Prosecutor issued a circular requiring prosecutors to actively investigate cases of slavery and provide free legal assistance for victims of slavery. (80,82)

According to Article 23 of the 2015 Anti-Slavery Law (Law 2015-052), the only entities other than Commissariat on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action that can file criminal cases on behalf of former slaves are legally registered human rights associations that have been operating for 5 years in Mauritania. (50, 39,74,79,81,85) The draft NGO law currently before parliament will ease registration restrictions on civil society organizations to operate in Mauritania, but it has not yet been clarified that these organizations, once registered, will be able to immediately bring criminal cases on behalf of former slaves. (39,57,58,59)

Evidence suggests that some police, prosecutors, and judges do not investigate cases of slavery after complaints are received, and that the government has prosecuted cases for lesser offenses to avoid bringing a slavery case to trial. In some cases, this is due to allegations of corruption or lack of political will to prosecute suspected slaveholders, or it may be due to misunderstanding of the 2015 Anti-Slavery Law. (4,12,56,87) There are also reports that investigative judges who receive anti-slavery cases may try to pressure slavery victims to drop their cases or accept mediation in lieu of prosecution. (38,76,79,80) The obstacles that victims of slavery encounter in filing complaints and the government's failure to adequately investigate these cases may be due to the insufficient allocation of resources by the government and a lack of political will to prosecute these cases to their maximum legal liability. (38,76,79,80)

In addition, two laws adopted in 2018 by the Government of Mauritania have drawn widespread concern in the international community. The anti-discrimination law, enacted in January, and the law on apostasy-related crimes, adopted in April, may be used to retaliate against anti-slavery organizations and restrict their ability to function, including their ability to file criminal cases or advocate for the end of slavery. (79,81,88-92) Although, as of the end of 2019 there were no reports that the laws had been used against anti-slavery organizations, there are still concerns that the laws could impede anti-slavery organizations from providing services to victims of slavery, including children. (79,81,91,93,94) In addition, the government has not specified its position on revising these laws. (39)

During the reporting period, the government sentenced seven anti-slavery activists to 6 months in prison for taking part in an unauthorized demonstration and inciting hatred and racism. A majority of these activists have since been released. (82,95) In addition, there are reports that some cases of slavery are resolved through social mediation rather than through the criminal justice system. (12,19,67)

Enforcement authorities, including the Anti-Slavery Courts, lack personnel, funding, and training to adequately coordinate and enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,10,12,13,20,69,71,96,97)

The Government of Mauritania did not publish complete data on the number of investigations related to violations of the worst forms of child labor, but international organizations and local NGOs reported that the government investigated cases involving child victims. This included repatriating 90 Senegalese children smuggled into Mauritania to be exploited in fishing, domestic work, and drug production, and for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. (17,19)

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, including the incorporation of all relevant agencies to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Child Protection Council	Aims to develop and implement policies and programs to eradicate all forms of violence against children, including child labor. Chaired by the Prime Minister’s adviser on social affairs and includes government and civil society stakeholders that address children’s rights. (36,38,98-101) The Ministry of Labor did not participate in the activities of the National Child Protection Council. (39)
General Delegation for National Solidarity and the Fight Against Exclusion (<i>Taazour</i>)*	Coordinates and implements government programs to provide education, economic opportunity, and health services to vulnerable populations, including communities of slave descent; replaces <i>Tadamoun</i> . (12,57,102,103) In 2019, the government allocated nearly \$550 million over 5 years to <i>Taazour</i> for implementation of government programs to address vulnerable populations, including communities of slave descent. (12)
Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights	Coordinates and monitors government efforts to promote human rights in Mauritania, including those related to the UN CRC. Led by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Relations with Civil Society and includes representatives from <i>Taazour</i> , the CNDH, and other ministries. (65,104) The Committee was active during the reporting period. (12)

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

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor (2015–2020)	Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by strengthening child labor laws, training relevant government officials, implementing awareness-raising campaigns, and mobilizing funds for social programs to withdraw children from child labor. Overseen by the Ministry of Labor. (1,6,13,65)
National Child Protection Strategy†	Aims to protect children against violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. The strategy specifically includes children exploited at work or victims of human trafficking, children living on the streets, and children who are victims of violence or sexual exploitation. (12,105)
Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development (2016–2030)	Aims to reduce poverty, promote sustainable development, and increase access to fundamental social services. Overseen by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development. (106,107) Integrates strategies to increase birth registration and access to compulsory education, strengthen social protection systems for children, and support efforts to combat slavery, including its vestiges. (106)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In 2019, the government, in consultation with the IOM, finalized a new draft National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons, which replaces the previous draft that had been under review since 2015. The government expects to adopt the plan in 2020. (12,56,108) Reports indicate that efforts to implement most of the key policies related to child labor, particularly the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor, have been delayed due to insufficient allocation of resources. (38,76,109,110)

In 2019, Mauritania became a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7. This involves a commitment to increase action-accelerating commitments toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of forced labor, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labor by 2025. (111) The Government of Mauritania created an action plan, which includes the goal of ending child labor in dairy farming and artisanal fishing. (112)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

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

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Program to Eradicate the Effects of Slavery†	Government program that supports the reintegration and rehabilitation of former slaves. (4,113) In 2019, the program opened 82 schools and continued to implement income-generating activities in communities of slave descendants and other vulnerable populations. (12,20,38,76)
Cash Transfer <i>Tekavoul</i> (2015–2020)	A \$45 million <i>Taazour</i> program, supported by the World Bank, that provides cash assistance to families with school-age children, conditioned on children's school attendance. (114) In 2019, expanded coverage from 30,000 vulnerable households to 45,000 households, and included efforts to increase civil registry enrollment. (102,103)
Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children†	MASEF-operated program that provides food, shelter, education, and vocational training to vulnerable children, many of whom are <i>talibés</i> . Operates in Aleg, Kaedi, Kiffa, Nouadhibou, Rosso, and Nouakchott. (7,16,34) In 2019, MASEF managed seven Centers and plans to open an eighth Center in 2020 to provide victim care services to children in need, including victims of human trafficking. MASEF assisted approximately 350 children and monitored 700 children through these centers. (12,17)
Model <i>Mahadras</i> Program†	Ministry of Islamic Affairs-funded program that provides monthly cash transfers of approximately \$27 to parents whose children are enrolled in model <i>mahadras</i> . In conjunction with this program, also operates adult literacy classes for 8,000 <i>imams</i> across Mauritania to raise awareness of child rights, including information on child labor and child trafficking. (19) In 2019, 60 <i>mahadras</i> across Mauritania were participating in the program, reaching approximately 1,800 children. (19)
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL-funded global projects implemented by the ILO to support global and national efforts aimed at countering child labor and the forced labor of adults and children. These projects include From Protocol to Practice: A Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labor (The Bridge Project) and Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAP 16) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor*. (12,115-117) In 2019, the Bridge Project held 12 regional consultations with government stakeholders and civil society organizations to finalize research methodology on a qualitative study on forced labor indicators, and carried out a Ministry of Justice-supported evaluation of the Anti-Slavery Courts operations to provide recommendations for improving enforcement. (12,80,118) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
UNICEF Country Program (2018–2022)	A \$13.8 million UNICEF-funded program that supports the government's efforts to improve education, birth registration rates, social inclusion, and protection for children, including refugees. (119) In 2019, provided access to education for 8,900 refugee children in the M'Bera camp and 10,900 children in host communities. (120)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritania.

Although Mauritania has social programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially in agriculture, herding, and domestic work, and for children in hereditary and indentured slavery. (12,65,76,121) Moreover, some government officials do not acknowledge that slavery continues to exist. (2,3,19,25,56,65,96) In addition, the lack of recent data on slavery limits the government's ability to develop effective social programs to comprehensively address this issue. Existing social programs for former slaves and awareness of the national laws on slavery are insufficient. (2,5,25)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Mauritania (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2019
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include sectors in which child labor is known to occur, including domestic work.	2009 – 2019
	Ensure that the age up to which education is compulsory extends to the minimum age for work.	2018 – 2019
Enforcement	Publish information on the number of labor inspections, child labor law violations found, and penalties assessed and collected.	2019
	Strengthen the labor inspection system by authorizing the labor inspectorate to assess penalties and initiate routine and targeted inspections, rather than performing inspections based solely on complaints received.	2014 – 2019

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors are trained on the General Child Protection Code.	2018 – 2019
	Increase personnel, training, and resources for labor and criminal law enforcement agencies, including the Anti-Slavery Courts, to adequately enforce labor laws, especially in remote areas and in the informal sector.	2010 – 2019
	Ensure that penalties are high enough to deter violators of child labor laws.	2015 – 2019
	Increase efforts to ensure that cases of the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery and forced begging, are investigated and prosecuted in accordance with the law.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that cases of slavery are prosecuted according to the law.	2017 – 2019
	Ensure the safety of anti-slavery activists and allow peaceful public discourse and assembly on slavery, slavery-like practices, and the vestiges of slavery, free from government interference.	2011 – 2019
	Legally recognize civil society organizations that work to protect the human rights of the Haratine ethnic minority and former slave groups, in particular those that assist victims of slavery in filing cases, register births, and ensure access to education, and ensure that legislation is not used to impair their ability to function.	2017 – 2019
Coordination	Ensure the Ministry of Labor's participation in the National Child Protection Council.	2018 – 2019
Government Policies	Ensure that key policies related to child labor, particularly the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor, receive sufficient funds for effective implementation.	2016 – 2019
	Approve and implement the National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons.	2015 – 2019
Social Programs	Ensure that all children are able to obtain birth certificates to increase their access to secondary education and reduce their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor.	2016 – 2019
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including those from families of slave descent and refugees, by increasing school infrastructure and teacher availability, especially in rural areas.	2011 – 2019
	Expand the scope of programs to address child labor, including in agriculture, herding, and domestic work, and the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary and indentured slavery.	2009 – 2019
	Implement a continuous awareness-raising program for government officials on the laws related to slavery and the worst forms of child labor.	2012 – 2019
	Conduct research and collect data on slavery to inform the development of effective policies and programs to identify and protect children who are at risk.	2010 – 2019
	Increase funding for social programs that provide services to former slaves.	2015 – 2019

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