

In 2019, Zambia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government increased the number of prosecutions for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor and expanded the powers of the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for labor violations. The government also established a new National Coordinating Committee for Children to enhance responses on child protection issues, including child trafficking, sexual exploitation of children, and child labor. However, children in Zambia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. The Education Act does not specify a compulsory education age, and human trafficking laws are discordant with international standards because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to establish the crime of child trafficking. In addition, labor inspectors lack sufficient financial and human resources to enforce child labor laws.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Zambia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1,2) Children also engage in work in agriculture. Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Zambia.

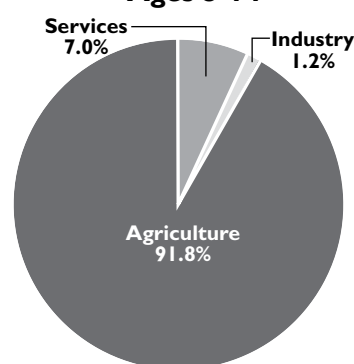
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	28.1 (992,722)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	65.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	27.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		80.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2013, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s Analysis of Statistics from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2008. (4)

Figure 1. 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	Work in the production of cotton,† tobacco,† and other cash crops (5–7)
	Raising and herding† cattle (2,8)
	Fishing,† working on boats, and cutting and smoking fish (6,9)
	Production of charcoal† (6,10)
	Production of timber (10)
Industry	Mining of ore and gems (2,10)
	Work in quarries, including carrying heavy loads,† conducting rudimentary mine drilling,† crushing stones,† and scavenging mine dump sites (2,6,8)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work (1,2,11)
	Street work, including begging and vending (2,6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,11,12)
	Forced labor in agriculture, herding, construction, domestic work, mining, and textile production, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,11)

† 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.

Child labor in Zambia is most prevalent in the agricultural sector and includes forced labor, sometimes resulting from human trafficking. (1,2,13) Children are primarily trafficked from rural areas in Zambia for domestic work in cities or forced labor on farms. (1,11) Sources reported the exploitation of children for cattle herding, which sometimes involves parents repaying debts by sending children, particularly young boys, to work as cattle herders for the people to whom they are indebted. (2) Orphans and street children are particularly vulnerable to child trafficking. (1,14) In addition, children from neighboring countries are also exploited for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation in Zambia, as a result of human trafficking. (1)




Illegal mining syndicates in the Copperbelt province called *jerabo* gangs employ children for mining activities, including forcing children to load trucks with stolen copper ore. (1,15) In January 2019, three children, ages 11, 13, and 15, were killed during an accident at a manganese mine in which they were working. (16,17) Commercial sexual exploitation of children is common, particularly along Zambia’s borders and transit corridors. (1,12) The government has conducted regular Labor Force Surveys and published the results in 2011, 2014, and 2016, but these surveys did not include child labor data. The government included a child labor module in its 2018 Labor Force Survey, but these results are not yet available to the public. (18-20)

Long distances to schools, particularly in rural areas, and costs of uniforms and materials are barriers to education. (2,21-23) The inability to access birth certificates and the prevalence of the early marriage of girls increase the vulnerability of children to child labor; children without birth certificates are not able to enroll in school, and once girls marry, they are removed from school and sometimes required to work outside the household. (14,23-25)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Zambia 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 Zambia’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including an undefined age range for compulsory education and lack of a list of activities considered to be light work, as required by Zambian law.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 24 of the Constitution; Articles 16 and 81 of the Employment Code Act (26,27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	19	Article 83 of the Employment Code Act (27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 14 and 24 of the Constitution; Articles 143 and 263 of the Penal Code; Article 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2008; Section 8 of the Employment Code Act (26,27-29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 17 of Amendment to the Constitution; Article 143 of the Penal Code; Articles 2 and 3 (1-4) of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2008; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act (26,27,28,29)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 144 of the Penal Code; Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act (27,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 80 and 83 of the Employment Code Act (27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 14 of the Defence Act (30)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 3 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2008 (28)
Compulsory Education Age	No		Article 16 of the Education Act of 2011 (31)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 15 of the Education Act of 2011 (31)

* No conscription (31)

In 2019, the Government enacted the Employment Code Act, which replaced multiple labor laws, including the Employment Act and the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act. The new law maintains 15 as the minimum age of employment, reaffirms prohibitions against the worst forms of child labor, and strengthens the authority of the labor inspectorate. (2,27,32) Previous regulations identifying hazardous work activities, however, are likely no longer operational because they drew their authority from the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act, which the Employment Code Act repealed. (27)

The law establishes a light work framework for employment of children between ages 13 and 15, but has not identified permitted light work activities. (27,33) In addition, human trafficking provisions remain discordant with international standards because they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to establish a crime of child trafficking. (28)

The Education Act requires that the government provide free education up to the seventh grade and stipulates that education is compulsory for children of “school-going age.” The Act, however, does not set a specific age or define “school-going age,” which may allow children to leave school before they are legally able to work and thereby increase their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (31,33)

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 and Social Security (MLSS) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS)	Implements, enforces, and regulates child labor laws. (19,34) Advises other government agencies on child labor issues and coordinates government efforts to combat child labor through its Child Labor Unit (CLU). (6,19) The CLU, which falls under the labor inspectorate, carries out inspections related to child labor. (35)
Ministry of Home Affairs	Enforces criminal laws against human trafficking, child commercial exploitation, use of children as soldiers, and use of children in illegal activities. (23)
Zambia Police Service	Collaborates with the Ministry of Justice to investigate and prosecute child labor cases. (23) Handles the enforcement of laws against human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities through its Victim Support Unit. (2,36) Through its Child Protection Unit, works with immigration officials and local officials to respond to child trafficking, enforce child labor laws, and remove vulnerable children from the streets, placing them into families, foster homes, or in safe homes. (2)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecutes criminal law enforcement cases related to the worst forms of child labor through its Office of the Prosecutor. (2,37)
Ministry of Community Development and Social Services	Provides social services to victims of human trafficking or sexual abuse. Operates one government shelter in Luapula province and oversees two NGO shelters. (1,11,38)

Labor Law Enforcement

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

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (23)	\$143,037 (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	155 (23)	160 (2)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (23)	Yes (2,27)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (23)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (23)	Yes (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (23)	Yes (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	1,533 (23)	615 (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	1,533 (23)	615 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	511 (23)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (19)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (23)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (23)	Yes (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (23)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (23)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (23)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (23)	Yes (2)

A referral mechanism exists through District Child Labor Committees that allows labor officers to refer cases to NGOs. (23) In 2019, the Child Labor Unit (CLU) within the labor inspectorate had an operational budget of \$10,000; this funding, however, was inadequate to enforce laws related to child labor. (2,39) As a result, the CLU was not able to conduct all of its planned child labor inspections. (2) The MLSS has stated that inadequate resources, including an insufficient budget, limited office space, inadequate training, and a lack of transportation and fuel have prevented it from adequately conducting inspections countrywide. (2,6,40) Although the government increased the size of its labor inspectorate to 160 inspectors during the reporting period, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Zambia's workforce, which includes approximately 6.9 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, Zambia would employ about 172 inspectors. (41,42)

The MLSS conducts labor inspections in registered private institutions only; it does not conduct inspections allowed by law in unregistered institutions in which child labor is more likely to be found. (43) The government did not provide information on the number of child labor violations and whether it imposed and collected penalties for inclusion in this report. (2)

In 2019, Zambia updated its labor code, which strengthened labor inspectors' authority to access facilities and documents during labor inspections and gave inspectors authority to assess penalties for labor code violations, including child labor. (2,27) The IOM launched a program with MLSS to strengthen the capacity of labor inspectors to identify and protect victims of human trafficking for child labor purposes. (2)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Zambia took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (44)	No (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (44)	No (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (44)	No (2)
Number of Investigations	38 (44)	5 (11)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (23)	10 (11)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	3 (44)	6 (11)
Number of Convictions	5 (44)	1 (11)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (44)	Yes (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (44)	Yes (2)

The government reported five investigations, involving at least 10 victims, and six prosecutions and one conviction, each related to child trafficking; however, information about other investigations related to other worst forms of child labor was not available. (11) In 2019, the Child Protection Unit of the Zambia Police Service handled 36 cases related to child labor, providing victim counseling and sensitization, but research could not determine the number of cases that resulted in law enforcement investigations and prosecutions. (2)

Government agencies do not have sufficient financial and human resources to address human trafficking, nor do they have consistent procedures to screen and identify human trafficking victims. (11)

In 2019, the government provided training related to trafficking in persons for 2,500 law enforcement officials and 26 magistrates, which included guidance on identifying, responding to, and coordinating with appropriate government agencies that work with victims of child trafficking. (45) The government also partnered with the IOM to train 20 staffers working for an NGO-funded and operated call center to which people can report information related to human trafficking. (11)

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 efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee on Child Labor (NSCCL)	Advises and oversees child labor matters, including implementation of hazardous work regulations. Chaired by the MLSS and comprises government representatives, employers, trade unions, and civil society members. (2,23,46) The government is currently reconstituting the committee to increase its effectiveness, but the NSCCL did not engage in activities in 2019. (2)
District Child Labor Committees (DCLCs)	Responds to child labor complaints at the district level, file complaints to MLSS, and serve as the main referral mechanism for social welfare services in collaboration with the CLU of the MLSS. Comprises the Zambia Police Service; MLSS; the Ministry of Community Development, Mother, and Child Health; and civil society stakeholders. (2) Coordinates with Community Child Labor Committees, which operate at the community level to raise awareness and refer complaints to DCLCs. DCLCs were active at the local level in 2019. (2)
National Coordinating Committee for Children*	Coordinates the implementation of the National Child Policy and government responses to child protection issues, including child trafficking, sexual exploitation of children, and child labor. Led by the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development in coordination with DCLCs that operate in selected districts. (2)
Inter-Ministerial Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking	Leads efforts to address human trafficking. (44) Chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs and includes representation from MLSS, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development, the Zambia Police Service, the Department of Immigration, the IOM, and a number of NGOs. (2) The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking did not meet regularly during the reporting period. (11)

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

Overlapping responsibilities and communication lapses among government agencies may hinder coordination and their ability to implement their mandates related to the worst forms of child labor. (6, 11, 48)

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 lack of implementation of policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Child Labor Policy	Outlines objectives for prevention and elimination of child labor and designates responsible agencies to address child labor issues. (23,49) In 2019, the government held several meetings to revise the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor under the National Child Labor Policy. (50)
7th National Development Plan (2017–2021)	Outlines Zambia's strategy to promote inclusive economic growth and national development to support Zambia's long-term goal of becoming a "middle income" country, including through the elimination of child labor, by 2030. Seeks to improve access to quality education and reduce poverty by 20 percent by 2021. (51) During the reporting period, the government implemented the 2019 Employment Code, adopted an updated National Employment and Labour Market Policy, and conducted the 2019 Labour Force Survey. (50)
National Youth Policy	Outlines Zambia's strategies to ensure that social programs benefit vulnerable youth, including victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. (52) Research could not determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Youth Policy during the reporting period. (2)
UN's Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (2016–2021)	\$806 million framework that builds upon the previous UNDAF but with a stronger emphasis on partnership. Aims to prevent the worst forms of child labor and protect children. (53) Research could not determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Sustainable Development Partnership Framework during the reporting period. (2)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (2,47,54,56)

The government drafted the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (2018–2022), which will guide the implementation of the National Child Labor Policy. The draft action plan is under review by key stakeholders across the country, though the government has not yet approved the policy. (57)

The government adopted an updated National Employment and Labour Market Policy in 2019, which outlines objectives for promoting decent work in Zambia, but the policy does not incorporate strategies for prevention and elimination of child labor. (58) Also, the government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Policy. (59)

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 programs to address child labor in all relevant sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Social Cash Transfer Program†	Government program to provide funds to families and increase school enrollment. (23,60) Research could not determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Social Cash Transfer Program during the reporting period. (2)
EMPOWER: Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia (2016–2020)	\$5 million, 4-year, USDOL-funded project implemented by Winrock International to address child labor. (61) To date, more than 1,400 adolescent girls have participated in training courses on rural entrepreneurship and leadership life skills. (62) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Achieving Reduction of Child Labor in Support of Education (ARISE)	Japan Tobacco International and Winrock International joint-initiative that seeks to combat the worst forms of child labor in tobacco-growing communities in Brazil, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia. (21,63) In 2019, the project targeted 30 district communities in Nkeyema District in western Zambia, emphasizing community empowerment through Child Labor Committees. (37)
USAID-Funded Projects	USAID-funded projects to increase protections for vulnerable children. Includes DREAMS, a U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief/USAID project, which supports vulnerable adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) through access to health services, including support for HIV prevention and treatment, family planning, and care for survivors of gender-based violence, as well as economic empowerment activities to promote access to a basic income. (50,64,65) Also includes, Service Efficiency and Effectiveness for Vulnerable Children and Adolescents (SEEVCA), a USAID and UNICEF joint initiative to improve protection services for children and adolescents, including children vulnerable to child labor. (66) During the reporting period, SCEEVA programs worked to develop a standardized, government-led case management system. (50)

† Program is funded by the Government of Zambia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (2,69)

The ILO Integrated Strategy on Tobacco, adopted in 2019, outlines a multi-country framework to address decent work deficits, including the elimination of child labor in tobacco-growing areas of participating countries. (70) As part of implementing the framework, the MLSS, Zambian Federation of Employers, and the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions launched a one-year project in tobacco-growing regions of Kaoma and Nyeyema Districts. (2) The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, in collaboration with IOM, also provided reintegration support to children who were trafficked for labor exploitation. Reintegration support included supporting children in returning to school, including prioritized assistance with school fees through existing social assistance programs, and providing economic start-up guidance and kits for affected families. (2)

Although Zambia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem in all relevant sectors, particularly regarding child labor in agriculture, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.

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 Zambia (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 the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2018 – 2019
	Determine and codify the types of hazardous work prohibited for children.	2020
	Determine through statutory instrument the “school-going age” for compulsory education, in line with the minimum age for work.	2012 – 2019
	Determine list of light work activities for children ages 13 to 15.	2018 – 2019

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws prohibiting child trafficking do not require threats, the use of force, or coercion for an act to be considered child trafficking.	2017 – 2019
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors receive adequate training and resources to enforce labor laws throughout the country.	2010 – 2019
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2012 – 2019
	Ensure that inspections cover all areas in which children work, including registered and unregistered businesses.	2010 – 2019
	Publish labor law enforcement information on child labor violations found and whether penalties were assessed and collected.	2019
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement investigators receive training on laws related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019
	Develop and implement consistent procedures to screen and identify human trafficking victims.	2018 – 2019
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor investigations.	2014 – 2019
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating committees, including the National Steering Committee on Child Labor and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking, are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2019
	Improve lines of communication and clarify responsibilities among agencies to improve effectiveness and referrals to social services.	2011 – 2019
Government Policies	Ensure implementation of key national policies, including the National Youth Policy and the UN's Sustainable Development Partnership Framework.	2019
	Finalize and begin implementation of the National Action Plan for Child Labor.	2019
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Policy and the National Employment and Labor Market Policy.	2013 – 2019
Social Programs	Publish child labor data, including the results of the child labor module of the Labor Force Survey, to inform policies and programs.	2011 – 2019
	Enhance efforts to make education accessible for all children by reducing distances children must travel to reach school, eliminating auxiliary school fees, increasing birth certificate registration, and taking measures to ensure that young married girls are able to continue their education.	2012 – 2019
	Ensure the implementation of government-funded social programs, including the Social Cash Transfer Program.	2019
	Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem in all relevant sectors, including agriculture, mining, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2011 – 2019

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