

In 2019, Fiji made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government successfully prosecuted a case of domestic child trafficking, resulting in the first conviction of its kind since 2014. The Fiji police also formalized its Human Trafficking Unit and hired seven dedicated officers. In addition, the Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations allocated \$160,000 to combat child labor, particularly in the sugarcane industry. However, children in Fiji engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. In addition, there are no criminal prohibitions against the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Fiji engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (1-4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Fiji. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		107.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (6)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization’s analysis, 2020. (7)

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	Cutting,† loading,† weeding, and spraying chemicals† on sugarcane (1,2,8,9)
	Planting, picking, and using chemicals† on tobacco (1)
	Collecting and splitting coconuts; harvesting rice; planting, harvesting, weeding, and spraying fertilizers on roots (including <i>dalo</i> and <i>yaqona</i>); and planting and harvesting other kinds of fruits and vegetables† (1)
	Pig farming and goat and cattle herding (1)
	Fishing† and deep-sea diving† (1,2,8,9)
Services	Street work, including pushing wheelbarrows for shoppers in markets, vending, washing cars, shining shoes, and begging (1,8-12)
	Domestic work (1,8,9,12)
	Working in garages, in retail shops, or roadside stalls (2,8,9,12)
	Selling fruit (1)
	Collecting bottles† and scrap metal† (1,8,9,12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,4,8,9,13-16)
	Forced labor in agriculture, begging, and domestic work, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,17)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (12,18,19)

† 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.




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During the reporting period, the NGO Pacific Dialogue and the ILO stated that they have received reports of children engaging in organized prostitution, including being advertised online. (8,9) Commercial sexual exploitation of children continued to occur in Fiji, particularly by family members, taxi drivers, foreign tourists, businessmen, and crew on foreign fishing vessels. (1,4,13-15,20) Parents sometimes send their children to live with families in cities or near schools to facilitate their continuing education and to perform light household work. Research found that some of these children are vulnerable to involuntary domestic work or are forced to engage in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, or shelter. (4,20-23) During the reporting period, there were some media reports of children involved in selling drugs in Fiji. (18,19)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Fiji 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 Fiji's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including identification of light work activities permissible for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 92 of the Employment Relations Promulgation (24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 40 of the Employment Relations (Administration) Regulations; Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (25,26)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6 and 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 20–21 of the Immigration Act; Articles 102–103 and 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (24,27,28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 20 of the Immigration Act; Articles 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (24,27,28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 225–227 of the Crimes Decree; Article 62A of the Juveniles (Amendment) Act (24,28,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 58 of the Juveniles Act (24,30)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (31)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (31)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Compulsory Education Order; Compulsory Education Regulations (32)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 31 of the Constitution of Fiji (54)

* No conscription (31)

The Employment Relations Promulgation specifies the conditions under which children ages 13 to 15 may engage in light work, but does not include a list of activities that are permissible. (24,33)

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 Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR)	Lead agency responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor. Investigates places of employment and child labor law violations. (2,8-10) Monitors compliance with the minimum age for employment requirements and the Employment Relations Promulgation. Oversees 14 Divisional Labor Offices responsible for investigating cases of child labor and making appropriate referrals. (10) Coordinates activities at the national, divisional, and district levels through the regional Inter-agency Committees on Child Abuse, including conducting trainings on child labor. Maintains a 24-hour phone line to accept reports of child labor and refers children to social services when appropriate. (2,8,33) With the establishment of a Labor Inspection System on Child Labor, over 200 child labor cases have been investigated since 2011. (36,37)
Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA)	Responsible for women and gender issues, including protecting women and children from abuses. (38)
Employment Relations Tribunal	Adjudicates alleged violations of child labor provisions in the Employment Relations Promulgation. (2,8)
Fiji Police Force	Investigates criminal violations regarding child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. (8) Enforces laws on child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and illicit activities. Maintains a Human Trafficking Unit (HTU) and provides training to other police units focused on combating human trafficking. (10,20) Collaborates with the Australian Federal Police to combat potential child sex tourism by Australian nationals, who comprise the largest tourist group visiting Fiji. (21) In 2019, the Fiji Police Force formalized its HTU and employed seven officers responsible for enforcing criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (8,9,33)
Department of Immigration	Responsible for immigration services, refugee services, and efforts to combat human trafficking. Administers and enforces Immigration, Passport, and Citizenship Acts. (8) Coordinates with the Fiji Police Force to investigate cases involving underage victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, which are then tried in the criminal court system. (8)
Departments of Social Welfare and Public Prosecutions	Enforce laws on child trafficking. Operate four homes and provide social services for child trafficking victims. (10)

In 2019, the Fiji Police Force and the Department of Immigration met quarterly to discuss human trafficking issues involving foreign nationals. (9) In addition, MEPIR maintains a database on child labor, which standardizes current and past data in all seven districts in Fiji. (8,9)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of MEPIR that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including that inspections must first seek the business owners' permission before conducting inspections in the informal sector.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3.25 million (8)	\$3.9 million (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	71 (8)	73 (9)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (8)	N/A (9)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	3,800 (8)	3,562 (9)
Number Conducted at Worksite	3,800 (8)	3,562 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	13 (8)	41 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (8)	0 (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (8)	N/A (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (9)

In 2019, MEPIR exceeded their goal of conducting 3,000 labor inspections per year and established the reduction of child labor as a strategic priority for the government. (8)

The Child Labor Unit within MEPIR was disbanded, and now all labor inspectors are expected to look for child labor violations during inspections. (8,9) Inspections are conducted in the workers' language, including English, Fijian Hindi, and vernacular Fijian. (2) Unannounced inspections are permitted within the informal sector, but inspectors must first seek the business owners' permission before conducting the inspection. If there is reasonable cause to believe that prior notification of an inspection will prejudice the performance of the inspector's duties, a police officer must accompany the inspector during the inspection. (8,9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to combat child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (8)	N/A (9)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	2 (8)	2 (9)
Number of Violations Found	2 (8)	2 (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	1 (8)	1 (9)
Number of Convictions	0 (8)	1 (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (39)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (9)

MEPIR allocated a budget of \$160,000 from June 2018 to June 2019 to conduct 30 investigations, hold 5 training sessions for the sugarcane sector, and conduct outreach campaigns. (9) During the reporting period, subject matter experts conducted 10 lectures for law enforcement officials on human trafficking topics, including the exploitation of child labor. (9) Additionally, the Human Trafficking Unit conducted trafficking-in-persons awareness trainings, including for new police recruits and public prosecutors. (20)

In Fiji, criminal authority agencies, including the Fiji Police Force, can refer child labor cases on a case-by-case basis to the Departments of Social Welfare and Public Prosecution. (2,8,9)

In 2019, an ongoing child labor case involving aggravated sexual servitude and domestic trafficking of children was successfully prosecuted, the first conviction of its kind since 2014. The accused, who was charged with one count of aggravated sexual servitude and three counts of domestic trafficking, was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for domestic trafficking and sexual servitude of a minor. (9,40)

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 mechanisms to coordinate activities for commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Agency Network	Chaired by the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations. (41) Focuses on child labor issues at the district and provincial level. Monitors and reports cases of non-compliance. (42) Comprises inter-agency committees in nine towns in Fiji. This body was active during the reporting period. (42)
Inter-Agency Taskforce on Beggars	Addresses issues concerning children who beg and other exploited children. Enforces zero-tolerance policy on child begging. (11) Ministry of Social Welfare, Women, and Poverty Alleviation and police regularly conduct patrols to identify and assist children. This body was active during the reporting period. (41)
Inter-Agency Committee on Child Abuse	Investigates child labor cases, refers children to school, and monitors the cases when a referral is made to the Department of Social Welfare. (2,3,43) Shares information on child labor cases, including the worst forms of child labor. (8,9) This body was active during the reporting period. (9)
Regional Inter-Agency Committees on Child Abuse	Work on child labor issues. Comprising NGOs, Fiji Police Force, Public Prosecutor's Office, Solicitor General's Office, Department of Social Welfare, MEPIR, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education (MOE). (8) This body was inactive during the reporting period. (42)

Although the Government of Fiji has established mechanisms to coordinate efforts to address child labor, it does not have coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including the lack of a national policy to address child labor and human trafficking.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	A multinational strategic framework, comprising 14 South Pacific nations, created to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. (46) During the reporting period, UNICEF worked with the Government of Fiji to review its child protection laws and inter-agency guidelines and plan a training for social welfare officers in 2020. (42)
Free Education Grant	Provides 12 years of tuition-free education for children with Fijian citizenship in 904 eligible primary and secondary schools. Also provides bus passes to students, and boats and outboard motors for island communities with staff and students commuting to school. In 2019, \$93,000 from MOE paid for the provision of boats and outboard motors to assist students in island maritime and rural areas. (9,42)

In 2019, the Government of Fiji set a goal to accelerate the eradication of child labor by 2025, and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. (8,9) Although the government has drafted action plans to combat child labor and human trafficking, these have not been approved. (4,8,9,20,22,33,43,44,47,48)

In 2019, Fiji became a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7, which involves a commitment to accelerate action toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of child labor by 2025, and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. Fiji held a National Strategic Planning Forum to develop a roadmap to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which includes stronger national

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legislation, policies, and compliance mechanisms to protect children from all forms of child labor; data collection; expansion of social programs; and targeted policies to combat the worst forms of child labor. (49)

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 addressing the needs of victims of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	Multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries. (51) Prioritizes children's rights including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. (51) During the reporting period, sponsored trainings for government officials on the rights of children, including trainings on child abuse and child labor. Provided \$126,000 to MOE to enhance government capacity to provide child protection services. (41)
Education Assistance Programs†	MOE Food Voucher and Bus Fare Assistance program provides \$24 in food vouchers and subsidized bus fares to families with combined annual income of less than \$7,382 to offset the cost of education for children attending remote schools. (34,43) MOE Tuition Fee Free Grant program provides subsidized tuition fee free grants for early childhood education centers or students attending preschool. (22) These programs were active in 2019. (41)
Child Protection Program and Allowance‡	MWCPA Child Protection Program raises awareness of, and enacts recommendations from, the UN CRC. (8,9) In 2019, the government allocated \$230,000 for child protection programs to raise awareness on the UN CRC. MWCPA Child Protection Allowance assists single mothers, widows, and children. (8) In 2019, the government provided \$4 million for the Child Protection Allowance. (9)
Trafficking Victims Rehabilitation Programs†	Safety Net Project funds rehabilitation services for females who are under 18 and victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Receives referrals from various entities, including the Fiji Police. (41) This program was active during the reporting period. (41) Homes of Hope is an NGO program that assists victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking. MWCPA contributed \$69,000 during the reporting period. (8,9)

† Program is funded by the Government of Fiji.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,11,52)

Although Fiji has a program that targets child labor, the scope of this program is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, and children who may be sent to live with other families. (4,9) While NGOs provide limited support services, these are concentrated in the capital city of Suva. (53)

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 Fiji (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.	2013 – 2019
	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are specific enough to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2019
Enforcement	Ensure that penalties are assessed for child labor violations detected.	2019
	Allow unannounced inspections within the informal sector without having to first request permission from the business owner.	2018 – 2019
Coordination	Establish a coordinating mechanism to address all of the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.	2019
	Ensure that Regional Inter-Agency Committees on Child Abuse are active and fulfill their mandate to combat child labor and abuse.	2018 – 2019

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Adopt policies to combat child labor and human trafficking.	2013 – 2019
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2019
	Increase the availability of support services for children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and involuntary domestic work from living with other families.	2010 – 2019

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