

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2021, Armenia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government nearly doubled the staffing of their labor inspectorate from 27 inspectors to 50, with additional funding and intentions to hire more than 90 inspectors in the near future. The Health and Labor Inspection Body also held regular trainings for inspectors around the country and entered into an agreement with the Agricultural University to train students on labor issues, including child labor and human trafficking. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Armenia is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because it continued to implement a regression in law that delays advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Labor inspectors still lack the authority to conduct unannounced inspections, despite receiving additional authority in 2021. The lack of unannounced inspections may leave potential violations of child labor laws and other labor abuses undetected in workplaces. Children in Armenia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. The government does not routinely collect or maintain official data on child labor. In addition, the minimum age for work does not meet international standards because labor legislation does not apply to children working in the informal sector. Lastly, the laws criminalizing commercial sexual exploitation of children are insufficient because they do not explicitly criminalize those engaging in commercial sex involving children.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Armenia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-3) Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. (1,3-5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Armenia.

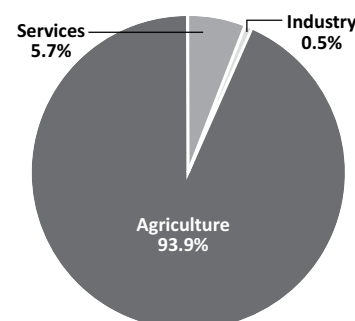
**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.0 (24,602)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	8.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		93.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020 published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Child Labor Survey (SIMPOC), 2015. (7)

**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.

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including planting and harvesting potatoes (8,9)
	Raising livestock, including cattle breeding, cattle herding, and sheepherding (1,4)
	Forestry, fishing (8)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown(4,8,9)
Services	Vehicle maintenance (4,8)
	Selling food (2,4)
	Street work, including vending, gathering scrap metal, selling flowers, and begging (1,8)
	Working in shops (1,4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,3,10,11)
	Forced begging and forced labor in stores (1,2,10)

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

The Government of Armenia does not routinely collect or maintain official data on child labor. (12) Reports indicate that significant numbers of children, including some below the age of 14, leave school to work in the informal sectors in agriculture and construction, and increasing numbers of children are engaged in begging. (5,13) In February 2021, the government adopted procedures for identifying children who have dropped out of compulsory education, and created an institutional response mechanism to prevent child trafficking and child labor, as children outside of the education system are a high-risk population for exploitation. (14) However, there is no enforcement of the mandatory school attendance requirement, nor are there programs to identify, assess, and address the reasons for truancy or dropping out. (15) In particular, authorities note that less-educated, socially vulnerable girls are at higher risk of being trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. (11)

Although Article 38 of the Constitution of Armenia and Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education guarantee free universal education, children from ethnic minority and low-income families continue to have reduced access to education. (16-18) Children of families who travel for seasonal labor and work on farms in remote rural areas are also less likely to be enrolled in school and are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including forced child labor in agriculture. (19) Reports also indicate that in rural areas, families may keep girls out of school because of cultural expectations or concerns about severe gender imbalance in classrooms. (5,20)

The Law on Education requires all schools to be inclusive for children with disabilities by 2025, and the 2017–2021 National Strategy for Child Rights Protection includes priority actions to ensure equitable and inclusive education. (18,21,22) The government has made progress in improving access to education in bordering and remote communities and implemented a program to pay tuition fees for students from national minorities. The detection of school dropouts has also been a priority for the government, which implemented a new electronic system to identify children who are not enrolled in mandatory school programs. (1)







However, children with disabilities still face difficulty accessing mainstream education where school buildings remain inaccessible. In addition, lack of special education teachers and other specialists makes it particularly difficult for students with mental disabilities to access mainstream education. (22,23) Challenges remain with institutionalized children, such as those living in government boarding schools, orphanages, and special education institutions. (24,25) These children are more likely to experience physical and psychological violence and are at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. (9,10,24) Children living in these institutions are reportedly also vulnerable to exploitation in child labor, including labor within the institutions. (26,27)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Armenia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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**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 Armenia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of definitions for forced labor and light work.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Articles 15 and 17 of the Labor Code; Article 57 of the Constitution; Article 41.6 of the Administrative Violations Code (16,28,29)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 257 of the Labor Code (28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Decree on Approval of the List of Occupations and Work That Are Likely to be Heavy and Hazardous for Persons Under the Age of 18 Years, Pregnant Women, and Women Taking Care of a Child Under the Age of 1 Year; Articles 140, 148, 149, 153, 155, 209, 249, and 257 of the Labor Code (28,30)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 57 of the Constitution; Article 3 of the Labor Code; Articles 131 and 132 of the Criminal Code (16,28,31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 132 of the Criminal Code (31)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 131, 132, 166, and 261–263 of the Criminal Code (31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 63, 165, and 266 of the Criminal Code (31)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16‡	Article 29 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Law on Military Service and Status of the Military Servant; Government Decree No. 525-N of April 26, 2012 (32-34)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 19 of the Law on Military Service and the Status of the Military Servant (32)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 29 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Articles 165, 224, and 395 of the Criminal Code (31,34)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Article 18 of the Law on Education (18)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 38 of the Constitution; Article 6 of the Law on Education (16,18)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (33)

In May 2021, the government adopted a new Criminal Code which entered into force in July 2022. However, research was not able to determine what this legislation contains. (1,35) In July 2021, amendments to the mandate of the Health and Labor Inspection Body (HLIB) entered into force, which grant the HLIB authority to investigate cases of administrative offences in the field of labor law and to impose sanctions. (1,36)

The Labor Code allows children ages 14 and 15 to work restricted hours with the permission of a parent or guardian but does not identify specific activities that constitute light work. (28) In addition, the Constitution,

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Criminal Code, and Labor Code prohibit forced labor, but enforcement of this prohibition may be hindered by the failure of Armenian law to define "forced labor." (16,28,31)

The minimum age for work law does not meet international standards because labor legislation does not apply to children working in the informal sector. (28,29) In addition, the laws criminalizing commercial sexual exploitation of children are insufficient because they do not explicitly criminalize those engaging in commercial sex involving children. (31,37)

### 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 authority of enforcement agencies 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 and Social Affairs (MLSA)	Oversees child welfare issues and develops labor legislation policy. (1) Works to identify vulnerable populations, such as laborers in animal husbandry, those who are outside of the education system, and those attending schools for students with disabilities and behavioral issues. (38)
Health and Labor Inspection Body (HLIB)	Ensures compliance with legal requirements in the fields of healthcare and labor law. (1) Responds to labor complaints through administrative proceedings. (2,8) Publishes an annual report on activities undertaken the previous year and plans for the upcoming year. (2,39) Operates a complaint hotline and online platform to which individuals can submit complaints. (2)
General Department of Criminal Police	Enforces laws against the worst forms of child labor and refers identified crimes to the Investigative Committee for further investigation. (2,40) Enforces anti-human trafficking laws and conducts preliminary investigations of alleged trafficking in persons cases. Every regional police unit throughout the country has a designated officer whose portfolio includes human trafficking. (40) All cases suspected to be human trafficking are referred to the anti-trafficking unit within the National Police's Department to Fight Against Crimes Against Human Beings and Property. (40,41) Through the Department on Defending the Rights of Minors and Combating Domestic Violence Within the Police, identifies and conducts preliminary investigation of crimes in which children are victims or perpetrators. (42) Operates a hotline to receive complaints related to human trafficking and migration issues. (9,40,43)
Department for the Investigation of Trafficking in Persons, Crimes Against the Sexual Inviolability of Minors and Illegal Drug Trafficking Crimes within the Investigative Committee	Conducts in-depth investigations of all cases of human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children referred to the Investigative Committee by the police. (40,41)

In 2021, the MLSA funded and conducted trainings for employees of childcare institutions, social workers, and first responders on identifying and addressing human trafficking and labor exploitation. MLSA experts also worked with other agencies to identify children from vulnerable groups who have dropped out of school and are at higher risk of exploitation. (11)

During the reporting period, the HLIB was empowered to launch administrative procedures and on-site inspections in response to complaints, including child labor complaints. HLIB is also authorized to issue penalties for any administrative violations they uncover and to refer cases to criminal law enforcement when appropriate. (44) When performing routine inspections, HLIB must inform employers of an upcoming inspection 3 business days in advance, and legislation limits to a legally predetermined checklist of issues the questions inspectors can ask. (40,45) HLIB has broader authority when responding to a complaint, in which case HLIB may issue notification to the employer via e-mail and immediately conduct a site visit. However, if the business director or acting director is not present and does not receive the notification, inspectors are not allowed to start. (1,44) In addition, during routine inspections inspectors follow a predetermined checklist for specific industries or the Law on Administrative Proceedings, whereas when responding to a complaint, they are not restricted to a predetermined checklist. (1,44) To streamline future labor inspections, the government is set to finalize a single universal checklist on labor law violations to be applied across all sectors in 2022. (1)

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### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, the lack of authorization to conduct unannounced inspections in Armenia may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2.1 million (2)	\$2.8 million (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	28 (2)	50 (1)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (29)	Yes (29)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (15)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	No (2)	Yes (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (2)	No (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	119 (2)	544 (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	119 (2)	29 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (2)	1 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	1 (2)	1 (1)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	1 (2)	1 (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (28)	No (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (2)	No (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2,38)	Yes (1)

In 2021, HLIB had funding to employ 92 labor inspectors, of which 50 positions were filled. (1) The number of labor inspectors actually employed by HLIB during the reporting period is likely insufficient for the size of Armenia's workforce, which includes around 1.3 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 20,000 workers in transition economies, Armenia would need to employ about 66 labor inspectors. (46,47) The government reports that their funding is sufficient to carry out their mandate, and that inspectors are provided with sufficient office space, vehicles, fuel, and other technical equipment. HLIB regularly holds seminars and various discussion sessions for regional labor inspectors who are informed about legislative changes affecting their responsibilities. (1) While HLIB continued to focus on enforcing regulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2021, the body also continued a variety of awareness-raising activities during the year, including on child labor laws. In addition to conducting outreach through social media and traditional media, HLIB targeted agricultural regions during the harvest season to inform local government representatives and others about children's rights. (1)

HLIB also entered into an agreement with the Agricultural University through which they hosted 35 students for an internship, during which students received training on child labor and trafficking in persons. The government has announced that they intend to conduct a similar program in 2022 with the State Economic University. (1)

In 2021, HLIB carried out 29 scheduled, on-site inspections and initiated 515 administrative proceedings. The inspections primarily targeted mining and manufacturing businesses and related to the protection of workers' health and safety. (1) As a result of one administrative proceeding, HLIB identified a minor who was contracted to work overtime and at night, in contravention of labor legislation, and imposed a fine on the minor's employer. The high number of administrative proceedings relative to on-site inspections is due in part to the lack of approved checklists in many spheres. (1)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Armenia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including deficient structures for investigation planning.

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**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (15)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (15)	Yes (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (15)	Yes (1)
Number of Investigations	3 (15)	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	1 (15)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	2 (15)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	0 (15)	1 (1)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (15)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8,38)	Yes (1)

During the reporting period, authorities investigated three cases of labor exploitation. Two of the cases were dismissed, and the third case resulted in a woman being charged for forcing her daughter to beg. (1) Another case of forced begging, initiated in 2020, resulted in a conviction during the reporting period. The individual was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment, which was later revised to 2 years of probation. (1) Authorities identified and removed four children from labor exploitation, all of whom were referred to social services. One of the children was placed in an orphanage and the remaining three were transferred to a temporary shelter to receive assistance under Armenia's Law on Assistance and Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking. (1)

Nine minor victims of human trafficking were identified by authorities—seven boys who were subjected to labor trafficking, and two girls, one of whom was trafficked for labor and the other for commercial sexual exploitation. Authorities reported an increase in the use of social media to coerce and blackmail vulnerable individuals into sex trafficking. (11)

In 2021, the Academy of Justice held trainings for 34 investigators on assisting children who have been the victims of crime. Topics addressed in the trainings included the identification of child victims and the protection of children's rights through all stages of the investigation and trial. (1) However, law enforcement officials may not receive sufficient specialized training on interviewing survivors of child trafficking, which in some cases can prevent local investigators from collecting sufficient evidence to build a prosecutable case. (9) Although the Criminal Procedural Code includes provisions to protect witnesses and minimize victim re-traumatization, the government may not employ these measures in all human trafficking cases, including those involving minors. (43,48)

## 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 a lack of efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Ministerial Council to Combat Human Trafficking	Implements, coordinates, and monitors government efforts on trafficking in persons. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. (43,49) The Council was active during the reporting period. (50)
Interagency Working Group Against Trafficking in Persons	Advises and organizes the Ministerial Council to Combat Human Trafficking, and implements decisions made by the Council. Chaired by MLSA. (14,40,49) The working group was active during the reporting period. (11)
Referral Mechanism for Minor Victims of Trafficking in Persons	Oversees the process by which minor victims are referred to the victim identification committee and are provided assistance. The referral mechanism continued to serve minor survivors of trafficking in persons during 2021. (1,2,14)

Armenia lacks coordinating mechanisms to address other forms of child labor, including street work, the services sector, and agriculture. (13)



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### 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 mainstreaming of child labor issues into relevant policies.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2020–2022)	Supports the development of policy and the implementation of activities to address human trafficking. Commits the government to train specialists in multiple spheres, including law enforcement, the courts, educators, and medical providers. (14,38) In 2021, activities conducted under the National Action Plan included awareness raising and assistance. (11)
National Strategy for Child Rights Protection (2017–2021)	Promoted a unified state policy for the protection of the rights and interests of the child. Included an action plan that called for the development and introduction of oversight and monitoring mechanisms to prevent the involvement of children in the worst forms of child labor. (1,21) In 2021, the Armenian government requested the assistance of UNICEF to conduct an independent evaluation of the program. (1)

Under the National Action Plan, the government organized and funded a nationwide awareness-raising campaign from July 30 to December 2. As part of this campaign, multiple government ministries collaborated to produce four radio broadcasts and seven public service announcements on human trafficking. (11) The government also distributed 200 posters on addressing human trafficking and assistance available to survivors, and conducted seminars for social workers, first responders, high-school children and their parents, children living in special daycare facilities under MLSA oversight, and trafficking hotline operators. Finally, classes on trafficking topics were introduced as part of the middle and high school civics curricula. (11)

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, 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 inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Family Benefits Program†	Seeks to mitigate poverty for families with children by giving families a monthly payment based on their financial situation, the number of children in the family, and the geographical location of their home. (51) Research was unable to determine the impact of this ongoing program on child labor.
UNICEF Country Program for 2021–2025	Improves child protection systems, including through expanding programs for children in extreme poverty, improving social integration of children with disabilities, and developing a victim witness protection system. The original country program expired and a new one came into effect in 2021. (1,52)
Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking†	A government-funded shelter operated in partnership with NGOs that provides medical, psychological, social, and legal services to survivors of human trafficking, and access to education for children. In 2021, continued to provide services to survivors of trafficking in persons. (1,2,14,15)

† Program is funded by the Government of Armenia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (51)

To address at-risk youth issues, including children with disabilities and those experiencing mental and psychological violence, the government launched programs to facilitate institutionalized children's return to their families and established 17 regional centers throughout the country to provide pedagogical and psychological support. (1)

Although the Government of Armenia has implemented programs to address child labor, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs to assist children engaged in child labor in street work or in agriculture. In addition, personnel and resources are insufficient to meet the needs of many social services programs, and participation is low due to a lack of awareness-raising outreach by the government. (15)

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### 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 Armenia (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that labor legislation covers children working in the informal sector.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that Armenian law specifies the types of light work acceptable for children ages 14 to 15.	2014 – 2021
	Facilitate enforcement of labor law by codifying a definition of forced labor.	2016 – 2021
	Criminally prohibit and penalize the use of a child for prostitution.	2019 – 2021
Enforcement	Ensure that the Health and Labor Inspection Body is empowered to conduct unannounced inspections routinely, and not just in response to complaints.	2017 – 2021
	Empower inspectors to conduct inspections regardless of whether the business director or acting director is present.	2021
	Draft and approve inspection checklists that fully empower the Health and Labor Inspection Body to conduct inspections for child labor violations in all industries and ensure that such inspections are carried out.	2019 – 2021
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by increasing the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2017 – 2021
	Publish information on the number of child labor investigations, violations found, and prosecutions initiated.	2021
	Provide regular refresher courses for labor inspectors.	2020 – 2021
	Protect children by providing law enforcement officials with specialized training on interviewing survivors of child trafficking.	2018 – 2021
	Implement existing witness protection mechanisms to protect survivors of child trafficking who cooperate with law enforcement.	2011 – 2021
Coordination	Establish coordinating mechanisms to address all worst forms of child labor in all sectors, including in street work, services, and agriculture.	2009 – 2021
Social Programs	Improve understanding of child labor issues in Armenia by regularly collecting and maintaining data on child labor.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that all children, including girls, children in remote areas, those from low-income families and families that travel for seasonal labor, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have equal access to education.	2010 – 2021
	Strengthen support for potential victims through measures in the educational system to identify truant children and ensure they are not engaged in child labor.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure the availability of out-of-care services for deinstitutionalized children in parallel with increased efforts to prevent institutionalization of children and ensure that children currently residing in government institutions are not engaged in child labor.	2015 – 2021
	Ensure that mainstream education is accessible to children with special education needs and children with disabilities by improving the accessibility of the physical infrastructure and increasing the availability of special education teachers and other specialists for students with mental disabilities.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Family Benefits Program and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021
	Implement programs to address child labor in street work and in agriculture.	2009 – 2021
	Allocate sufficient personnel and resources to publicize and provide social services throughout the country, offer sufficient training to services providers, and assign reasonable caseloads	2020 – 2021

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