

In 2021, El Salvador made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Education invested over \$53 million to purchase computers that benefited 120,092 students and 12,000 teachers in the country. The government signed a cooperation agreement with the governments of Honduras and Guatemala to strengthen coordination and efforts to address trafficking in persons. The government also published results from its annual multipurpose household survey, which identifies child labor prevalence in the country. However, children in El Salvador are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and in illicit activities, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the harvesting of coffee. Law enforcement agencies continue to lack sufficient resources to enforce child labor laws throughout the country. Gaps also remain related to the lack of publicly available, comprehensive information on its labor and criminal law enforcement efforts. Finally, social programs do not adequately address the full scope of the child labor problem in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in El Salvador are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and in illicit activities, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the harvesting of coffee. (1,2-4) In 2021, the Director General of Statistics and Census published results from the 2020 El Salvador Annual Multipurpose Household Survey, which found that around 88,300 children between the ages of 5 and 17 are working in El Salvador, a 5.3 percent decrease since 2019. (5,6) The survey also found that more than 60 percent of child laborers live in rural communities and 34 percent do not attend school. However, it did not include information about the sectors in which children were working, as well as details on the specific worst forms of child labor to which children were subjected. (5,6) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in El Salvador.

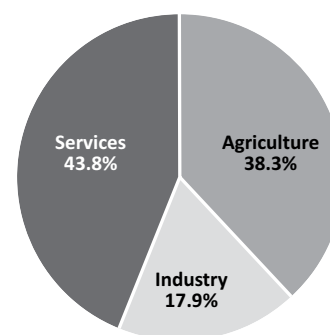
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.1 (41,069)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	91.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		86.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (7)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EHPM), 2020. (8)

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	Harvesting sugarcane† and coffee,† and production of cereal grains (2,9,10)
	Cattle-raising† (9,10)
	Fishing,† including harvesting shellfish and mollusks† (2,5,10-12)
Industry	Manufacturing fireworks† (2,10,12)
	Production of baked goods (9,10)
	Construction† (2,11,5)
Services	Garbage scavenging,† street begging,† washing cars, and vending† (2,4,5,13)
	Domestic work (2,4)
	Selling goods in markets or kiosks (5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,4,11,12,5)
	Use by gangs to perform illicit activities, including committing homicides, extortion, and trafficking drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2-11,5)
	Forced begging, domestic work, agricultural labor, construction, and work in textiles (2-5,11)

† 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.

Children in El Salvador often lack economic stability and educational opportunities and are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation. They are also recruited by gangs for illicit activities such as delivering threats, collecting extortion money, conducting surveillance activities, trafficking drugs, and committing homicides. (1,2,4,11,14) The MS-13 and Barrio 18 gangs are the most active in recruiting, training, and arming children in the country, in order to exert territorial control and produce revenue through criminal activities. Children are coerced to join the gangs, but once they join gang membership is permanent and they cannot leave without severe or deadly consequences for themselves or their families. (5) Gang recruits must commit murder to gain full membership status in the gang, thus forcing children to perpetrate homicides at the direction of adult gang leaders. (5) Additionally, gangs often force young girls into domestic servitude, including providing childcare, and into sexual exploitation. In some cases of gang activity, children are taken into prisons to be commercially sexually exploited by prisoners. (4,5,11) Reports indicate that those who resist have been assaulted or killed. (2,4,11) According to El Salvador's Trafficking in Person's Special Prosecutor and local NGOs, adolescent girls with limited education are among the most at risk of being trafficked. (14) LGBTQI+ adolescents are also at risk of being forced into commercial sexual exploitation by gangs. (2)

Children often emigrate to escape violence, extortion, and forced recruitment by gangs, in addition to seeking economic opportunities and family reunification. Human trafficking is also a driver of child migration. (4,15,16) Gangs target adolescent girls for forced commercial sex, causing them and sometimes their entire families to flee El Salvador in fear. Once en route, however, girls and other children from El Salvador remain vulnerable to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (4,15)

Multiple reports, including by third-party monitoring groups, indicate that the use of child labor in sugarcane harvesting has decreased since 2010. (1) However, despite ongoing government efforts to address child labor in this sector, recent data has not been published to demonstrate the impact of these efforts and provide details on specific government programs. (10)

At schools, children are recruited, extorted, and harassed by gangs, which may cause them to stop attending. (11) This situation is aggravated by the fact that a majority of schools are located in communities where gangs are present. (17,18) Indigenous children are sometimes threatened by gang members for crossing gang territorial lines that are set across ancestral indigenous land, forcing some of them to drop out of school. (19) Children who do not attend school are more vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (1,20) Children in El Salvador face numerous barriers to education such as insufficient funds allocated to education and precarious school infrastructure. (18) Poverty, particularly in rural areas, also presents a barrier to education in El Salvador because children leave school to contribute to family income. (18) According to the Comprehensive Law of




Protection of Childhood and Adolescence, a lack of identity documents should not prevent school enrollment. However, research indicates that children are still being required to have birth certificates to enroll in schools, in contravention of national law. (2,11) According to the Ministry of Education, this is standard procedure in every school in the country. In the cases when a child does not have a birth certificate, the school will consider their enrollment, but there is no guarantee of admission. (21) This practice may be having an adverse effect on the enrollment rates of children in school, because the cost for these documents is prohibitive for very poor families. (2,5,11) Approximately, 11 percent of children in the country do not have a birth certificate. (13) Reporting also indicates that children from indigenous communities disproportionately lack access to education. (1,2,11)

Many students drop out of school before completing their education, particularly during middle school, due to the existing barriers to education. (5) The Ministry of Education (MINED) reported that only 6 out of 10 students complete the compulsory education of 9 years, and over 851,794 students did not register for the 2021 school year. This is a 1.3 percent increase in the number of students failing to attend school compared to 2020. (5) The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the drop-out rate due to lack of access to computers and reliable internet connection needed to participate in virtual classes. (5) Rural areas have had the greatest difficulty keeping students in school. The General Directorate of Statistics' (DIGESTYC) 2020 Multiple Purpose and Household Survey reported in 2021 that only 6.5 percent of rural households had access to the Internet in 2020. (5) Additionally, most schools in the country are not constructed in a manner that would allow them to adjust to environmental changes. For example, 6 out of 10 schools are not prepared to face environmental risks, natural disasters, and epidemics. (5) Furthermore, 1,943 schools do not have adequate sanitation systems, 938 schools do not have access to drinking water, and an additional 964 schools have an inconsistent source of water. (5)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

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

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in El Salvador's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a minimum age for work that is lower than the compulsory age for basic education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Articles 114, 116, and 627 of the Labor Code; Article 38.10 of the Constitution; Articles 59 and 60 of the Law for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (LEPINA) (22,23,24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 105 and 627 of the Labor Code; Article 38 of the Constitution; Article 2 of Agreement 241 of 2011 (22,23,25)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of Agreement 241 of 2011 (25)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 54, and 55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Article 13 of the Labor Code; Article 56 of LEPINA; Articles 4 and 9 of the Constitution (22,23,24,26)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 54, and 55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Article 56 of LEPINA (24,26)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 54, and 55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 169–173 of the Penal Code; Article 55 of LEPINA (24,26,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3, 5, 54, and 55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 214 and 345 of the Penal Code; Article 56 of LEPINA (24,26,27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Articles 2 and 6 of the Military Service Law (28)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 215 of the Constitution; Articles 2 and 11 of the Decree No. 298 (22,29)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 345 of the Penal Code; Article 1 of the Law Prohibiting Gangs and Criminal Organizations; Article 7 of the Constitution (22,27,30)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Articles 5, 18, 20, and 22 of the General Education Law; Article 82 of LEPINA; Article 56 of the Constitution (22,24,31)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 5, 18, 20, and 22 of the General Education Law; Article 82 of LEPINA; Article 56 of the Constitution (22,24,31)

* Country has no conscription

‡ Age calculated based on available information (24,31)

As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (22-24) While children are not permitted to be employed other than in light work until the age of 16, the light work framework is inconsistent with international standards because it does not specify the activities of work permitted. (22-24)

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 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 Welfare (MTPS)	Inspects worksites for labor violations, including child labor, and monitors working conditions for adolescents who are granted work authorization. (2,12) Maintains a child labor unit dedicated to child labor law enforcement issues. (13,34) Refers cases of the worst forms of child labor to the Attorney General's Office. (2,13)
Ministry of Justice and Public Security	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, together with the Attorney General's Office, through the National Civil Police (PNC), which maintains a special trafficking in persons unit to investigate and prosecute human trafficking, including child trafficking. (2,5,12,26,35) Supports the Attorney General's Office in conducting investigations. (5)
Attorney General's Office	Responsible for initiating criminal proceedings for all types of the worst forms of child labor, as well as bringing the cases to trial. The Attorney General is the head of the office and is elected by the Legislative Assembly. (5)
The Salvadoran Institute for the Complete Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA)	Receives referrals from law enforcement agencies on cases of criminal exploitation of children, including for forced labor, human trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. Provides child victims with services, including shelter, medical attention, psychological help, and legal advice. (13,36)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in El Salvador took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3.2 million (11)	\$1.6 million (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	124 (11)	Unknown (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (11)	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (11)	Unknown (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	23,262 (11)	Unknown (5)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (11)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (11)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (11)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (11)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (11)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (5)

The government provided limited information on its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. In 2021, the funding for the labor inspectorate was reduced by almost 50 percent compared to 2020. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS) has indicated that its budget is insufficient to address workers' rights. (11) In addition, inspectors focus primarily on the formal sector in urban areas due to resource constraints, despite the size of El Salvador's informal sector. (2,11,37) While the number of labor inspectors in the country is unknown, according to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed countries, El Salvador would need to employ roughly 191 labor inspectors as its workforce consists of over 2.8 million workers. (38,39)

Article 627 of the Labor Code specifies a default fine of no more than \$60 per violation of all labor laws, including child labor laws. (23) Reports indicate that this amount is insufficient to deter labor violations. (35)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in El Salvador took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (11)	Unknown (5)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (11)	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (11)	Unknown (5)
Number of Investigations	14 (11)	Unknown (5)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (11)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (11)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (11)	Unknown (5)

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (11)	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (5)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. However, in October 2021, police officers arrested 30 individuals for sharing child pornography photos through social media applications. The Attorney General's Office also reported identifying 35 victims of child trafficking for sexual exploitation during the reporting period. (5,41) The Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Attorney General's Office reported it provided training during the reporting period to its 12 prosecutors, and some of these trainings were on human trafficking and smuggling, cybercrimes against children and adolescents, and on the Model of Cooperation for the Search of Missing Children. Additionally, the National Civil Police also received training on trafficking in persons during the year. (42) However, the scope of the government's criminal law enforcement efforts is insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem in the country, particularly when it comes to the worst forms of child labor.

The Attorney General's Office stated the need for more investigators and analysts due to the complexity of the investigations and the specialized investigation technique required. (5,11) Reports also indicate that the Ministry of Justice and Public Security is underfunded, lacks a significant number of resources such as cars and computers, and is unable to support a sufficient number of investigators to collect and analyze evidence to process case backlogs. (1,13,14,37) Salvadoran police chiefs and prosecutors noted that difficulties in collecting, sharing, and gaining actionable insights from investigative information remain a challenge, especially because investigative bodies lack the capabilities to share information electronically. (43)

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 efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor	Determines and implements government efforts to address child labor. Chaired by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS), includes 11 government agencies, along with representatives from labor unions, business associations, and NGOs. (12,44) Maintains a web-based monitoring system that allows government agencies to share and analyze information to coordinate the implementation of the Roadmap. (12) Research was unable to determine whether the National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor Coordinating Body was active during the reporting period.
National Council Against Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates government efforts to address human trafficking and implements the National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons. (12,33) Led by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and composed of 11 government agencies. (12,26) Research was unable to determine whether the National Council Against Trafficking in Persons Coordinating Body was active during the reporting period.
National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONNA)	Develops policies to protect the rights of children, including those regarding child labor, and implements the Law for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (LEPINA) and the National Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents in El Salvador (PNPNA). (12,24,45,46) Responds to cases involving the violation of children's rights by providing victim assistance. (13,47) In 2021, in compliance with the PNPNA, developed training and awareness activities on the rights of children and adolescents, including on the topic of the eradication of child labor. CONNA provided these activities to 1,640 people, 687 of which were children and adolescents. (5)
Departmental and Local Committees for Children's and Adolescents' Rights	Implement CONNA's policies, including PNPNA, at the departmental and municipal levels, and receive complaints of child rights violations. (12,24) Research was unable to determine whether the Departmental and Local Committees for Children's and Adolescents' Rights Coordinating Bodies were active during the reporting period.

In 2021, the government of El Salvador signed a cooperation agreement with the governments of Honduras and Guatemala to increase efforts against trafficking in persons. This agreement strengthens the existing coordination work that the Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Attorney General's Office performs in coordinating with

prosecutors in the region on investigations, search and rescue of victims, repatriation or return of nationals or foreign victims, legal protection of victims, and collection of evidence. (42,48)

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 the lack of mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant national policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Roadmap to Make El Salvador a Country Free of Child Labor and Its Worst Forms	Serves as the government's principal policy for eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Aimed to eliminate all child labor by 2020, by reducing poverty, improving education and health, protecting children's rights, and raising awareness of child labor. (49) Chaired by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS) along with the Ministry of Education (MINED), the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. (11) Although the policy was stated to conclude in 2020, some of the activities of the Roadmap were implemented in 2021 as they were identified as key actions to eliminate child labor. (5) In 2021, MTPS reported the results of its Plan of Integral Inspections that it began carrying out in 2020 in bars and nightclubs to identify cases of human trafficking and child labor. The inspections led to the sanctioning and temporary or permanent closure of several establishments. (21,50)
Torogoz Plan (Strategic Institutional Plan 2019–2024)†	Promotes educational inclusion and a protective school environment to prevent child labor and school dropouts. (5) The 2019 implementation date was delayed until 2021, partly due to the pandemic. (51,52) In 2021, MINED invested over \$53 million to purchase 132,095 computers which benefited 120,092 students and about 12,000 teachers nationwide. (5,53) In alliance with Internet service providers, MINED also offered an "Internet Education Package" which allowed students and public school teachers to access different platforms without cost. (5,54)
National Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (PNPNA) 2013–2023	Sets government policies aimed at guaranteeing children's rights and protecting children from violence and harm, including the worst forms of child labor. Other objectives include reducing poverty and improving health services and access to quality education for children, including children with disabilities. (46) In 2021, the Salvadoran Institute for Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Development (ISNA) launched an awareness campaign on child labor called "Let's Promote a Life Free from Any Form of Exploitation Against Children and Adolescents". The campaign targeted the use of child labor in sugarcane harvest and the extraction of mollusks in the Departments of La Paz and Sonsonate. (5) In June 2021, as part of the PNPNA, MTPS launched a social media awareness campaign to eradicate child labor in commemoration to the World Day Against Child Labor. Additionally, ISNA launched an awareness campaign in October 2021 called "Let's Unite to Guarantee the Rights of Children and Adolescents" with financial support from Save the Children and Doctors of the World. (5)
National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons	Defines a comprehensive plan to address human trafficking of adults and children for labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Aims to improve prevention efforts, victim assistance, prosecution, inter-agency coordination, training, and anti-corruption efforts. (55,56) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement the National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons.
National Policy to Support Early Childhood Development (<i>Crecer Juntos</i>) 2020–2030†	Established in January 2021. (13) Seeks to ensure children reach their maximum potential during early childhood, by guaranteeing the necessary conditions to provide them with quality services such as care, education, health, nutrition, and environments that protect their rights. It also aims to eradicate child labor in girls and boys between five and seven years old by 2030. (13,57)

† Policy was implemented during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (1,5,35,58–61)

The government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the National Youth Policy (2010–2024). (13,62)

In 2021, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare launched the Labor Market Information System (SIMEL) as a tool to analyze the labor market and main labor indicators in the country. (63) It assists in the development of public policy instruments that produce strategic impact on the labor market. (64) This system will provide information on the number of people working under dangerous conditions that could harm their physical and mental integrity, as well as on child labor. It will also provide information on the country's progress towards abolishing these types of occupations and detail challenges that remain to eliminate the prevalence of jobs of this nature. (65)

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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 full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Human Trafficking Public Awareness Campaigns†	Government public awareness campaigns implemented by the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONNA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to raise awareness about the dangers of human trafficking. Includes the "Protection Starts at Home" awareness program and the "Call 1 2 3" Hotline, both of which promote respect toward the physical, psychological, and sexual integrity of children and adolescents. (12,40,66,67) The hotline offers children and adults the ability to consult specialists in emergency situations. (67) In 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) joined the "Think Twice" regional campaign of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to alert young people to false offers related to irregular migration and trafficking in persons. (5,68) As part of this campaign, MFA worked with IOM, the National Youth Institute, and the Mayor of San Salvador to develop a program discouraging youth from irregular migration and to prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking. (5) This program led to the painting of a mural in the Vista Bella community with a message associated with the campaign. In the process of creating the mural, two workshops were carried out focused on raising awareness and the prevention of irregular migration and human trafficking. (5)
Sustainable Families Programs‡	Set of government programs focused on improving health, education, productivity, and security, and eliminating poverty through inclusive and sustainable economic growth and access to public services. Includes Health and Education Bonus Programs that assist families with cash transfers conditioned on children's school attendance and health checkups. (13,55,69,70) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement the Sustainable Families Programs.
School Prevention and Security Plan†	Programs implemented by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the National Civil Police (PNC) in schools with high levels of violence. Includes activities such as provision of psychological help, online classes, skills workshops for youth, and increased police patrols. (13,71-74) In 2021, PNC strengthened patrols in the proximities of schools in both urban and rural areas throughout the country. (5) In addition, agents of the prevention units developed training sessions with children and adolescents at various schools, particularly in those considered more vulnerable to crime. These training sessions sought to remove students from risky situations, such as affiliation with gang members, drug trafficking or use, and use of alcohol. (5) This initiative was supported by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. (5)
USDOL-Funded Projects	Projects which aim to reduce the incidence of child labor, including: Increasing Collective Action to Address Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Other Unacceptable Conditions of Work in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (2021–2026), a \$8.4 million project implemented by Pan American Development Foundation in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras; Youth Pathways-Central America (2015–2021), a \$17.2 million project implemented by Catholic Relief Services in El Salvador and Honduras; and Reducing Incidence of Child Labor and Harmful Conditions of Work in Economic Strengthening Initiatives (RICHES) (2017–2022), a \$1.6 million project implemented by the Grameen Foundation in El Salvador and the Philippines. (66,75,76) In 2021, the Youth Pathways-Central America project provided support and services for at-risk children and youth affected by the pandemic and natural disasters, such as in-kind food and biosecurity kits. It also assisted youth to continue school online as schools were closed for in-person instruction and provided employability skills training. (77) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.

† Program is funded by the Government of El Salvador.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (1,72,78,79)

In 2021, the Ministry of Education continued providing financial assistance to children in the form of school uniforms, shoes, and supplies, with its economic investment reaching a value of \$73.5 million. The Ministry of Education also contributed approximately \$14.2 million to the School Food and Health Program. (5)

Despite efforts to address human trafficking, services for boys who are human trafficking survivors are limited, which may leave them vulnerable to being trafficked again. (43) Although the government implements several programs to reduce the worst forms of child labor by assisting poor families and school children, research found no evidence that the government has programs that assist child laborers who may not be living with their families and not attending school, such as children engaged in domestic work. (13)

Civil society organizations in El Salvador have raised concerns that actions taken by the government, such as the creation of a commission to investigate the allocation of funds to civil society organizations, may have negative repercussions on them. They are specifically concerned that these actions will affect the ability to operate of

independent civil society organizations, including those working on children's issues, which in turn could increase the vulnerability of children to exploitation. (80-82)

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 El Salvador (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that the legal light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be undertaken by those under age 16.	2021
Enforcement	Provide sufficient funding and resources to the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and criminal law enforcement agencies to fully enforce child labor laws and investigate cases involving the worst forms of child labor, including in the informal sector.	2010 – 2021
	Ensure that the number of labor inspectors meets the ILO's technical advice.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that all labor inspectors receive training on child labor themes.	2018 – 2021
	Establish monetary penalties for labor violations that are proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the offense.	2009 – 2021
	Collect and publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of labor inspectors and whether they received refresher courses on child labor; the number and type of labor inspections conducted, the number of violations found, and the total penalties imposed and collected.	2021
	Collect and make publicly available complete information on training for new criminal investigators and data on the number of investigations, criminal violations found, number of prosecutions initiated, number of convictions, and number of penalties imposed related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2021
	Improve coordination between the National Civil Police and the Office of the Attorney General in their investigation and prosecution of criminal cases related to the worst forms of child labor, including by developing electronic information-sharing capabilities.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure there is a sufficient number of criminal law enforcement officials to carry out criminal investigations on the worst forms of child labor; and that they receive specialized training.	2021
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2018 – 2021
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Youth Policy for 2010–2024.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons and that data on these activities are published during the reporting period.	2020 – 2021
Social Programs	Collect and publish government statistics evaluating the impact of collaborative projects targeting child labor in sugarcane production.	2016 – 2021
	Remove barriers to education, such as birth registration requirements, and ensure access for all children, including students of indigenous descent.	2011 – 2021
	Ensure that students have access and equipment for remote education, when necessary.	2021
	Ensure that schools have proper infrastructure and sanitation systems to support students.	2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Sustainable Families program to address child labor and that data on these activities are published during the reporting period.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that adequate services are available for all human trafficking survivors, including boys.	2020 – 2021
	Implement programs to support child laborers who may not be living with their parents, including child domestic workers.	2017 – 2021
	Ensure annual surveys that provide data on child labor include information on specific child labor work sectors and the worst forms of child labor.	2020 – 2021

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