

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2021, Mali made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The transition government imposed and collected penalties for child labor violations, and published data on its labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of labor inspections conducted. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Mali is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continues to implement a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. The government provided support to a non-state armed group that recruited and used child soldiers in Mali. Children in Mali are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in hereditary slavery and in armed conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in the production of cotton and rice, and in artisanal gold mining. Although Mali's 2012 Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes trafficking for the purpose of slavery, it does not more broadly criminalize the act of slavery. Malian law also does not explicitly prohibit using, procuring, or offering of children for illicit activities, and allows children under the age of 18 to be penalized as a direct result of forced recruitment by armed groups. In addition, a new National Plan to Eliminate Child Labor has not been finalized or implemented, and social and rehabilitation services remain inadequate for victims of the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mali are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in hereditary slavery and in armed conflict. (1-6) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in the production of cotton and rice, and in artisanal gold mining. (3,5,7) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mali.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	49.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	43.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	26.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		49.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (8)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 5), 2015. (9)

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	Cultivating,† harvesting,† ginning,† processing, transporting,† and applying chemical fertilizers,† particularly in the production of cotton and rice (3,5,10-13)
	Raising livestock,† including oxen and small ruminants (5,10,11,13)
	Fishing,† including collection, throwing nets, and piloting small boats (10,14)
Industry	Artisanal gold mining,† including digging shafts,† extracting ore from underground tunnels,† crushing ore,† and amalgamating ore with mercury† (11,15-18)
	Rock quarrying† (5)
	Assembling fishing canoes† (10,13)
	Construction† (11)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work† (11)
	Street work,† including market vending,† begging,† and in the transportation sector (7,10,11,13,19)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in artisanal mining, domestic work, street work, production of salt, and farming (including in the production of rice) (3,5,11,12,20,21)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,11,22-24)
	Forced recruitment by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (11)
	Hereditary slavery (1,3,19,22)
	Forced begging by Koranic teachers (11,22)

† 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, especially of the Bellah community (black Tuareg), are subject to hereditary slavery in northern and southwestern Mali. (1,3,11,14,19,25,26) Some children are born into slavery, while others are born free but remain in dependent status. As a result, these children, along with their parents, are forced to work for their parents' former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. (25) Enslaved children perform agricultural or domestic labor, and are often sexually abused. (25) In 2021, at least 46 displaced child slaves were identified in Mali. (11)

Children, particularly those of Songhai ethnicity, work in debt bondage in the northern salt mines of Taoudenni. (25) As many as 45,753 children in the north, south, and west are also involved in artisanal gold mining, in which they are exposed to toxic substances and extreme temperatures, transport heavy loads of water and minerals, and work long hours. (3,5,11,17,18,27) Research indicated that around mining sites, children are also victims of commercial sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. Research also found that children working in mining sites are involved in the trafficking of narcotics, and that they do not go to school. (5,11) Many of the children working in mines are from neighboring countries in the region. (11)

Some boys placed in the care of Koranic teachers for education are forced by their teachers to beg on the street or work in fields, after which they must surrender the money they have earned to their teachers. (3,25) Research indicates that children forced to beg were not only from Mali, but also from neighboring countries, including Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire. (5,11) While the government frequently encounters cases of child begging, it does not have the capacity or the appropriate facilities to provide shelter and social services to these children, given the widespread nature of this issue in the country. (5,11)

During the reporting period, there was an increase in child trafficking, forced child labor, and forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups in Mali due to insecurity from armed conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic, and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions. (11) Also in 2021, terrorist and armed groups recruited children as combatants, spies, laborers, and in other capacities, particularly in northern and central Mali. (28) In addition, armed groups controlled some artisanal gold mines in northern Mali and used children for forced labor at those locations. (5,14,27) As in past years, children continued to be forcibly recruited and used by the Platform, the Coordination of Movements for Azawad, Macina Liberation Front, and Dan Na Ambassagou, among other groups; in 2021, there were at least 352 verified cases of children recruited by these groups, compared with 284 the previous year, with 66 eventually rescued. (6,11) Despite banning the military from recruiting for and using children in armed conflict in 2020, a general in the Armed Forces of Mali (FAMa), El Hadji Ag Gamou, also leads the Imghad Tuareg and Allies Self-Defense Group (GATIA), a subgroup of the pro-government signatory armed group coalition, Platform, which splintered in 2019. (13,14,18,29) During the reporting period, the government continued to provide in-kind support to GATIA, overseen by General Gamou, and to other non-state armed groups that recruited and used children in armed conflict. (12,14,30-32)

Although the Constitution guarantees free and compulsory education, many children, especially girls, do not attend school because parents are expected to pay fees for registration, uniforms, transportation costs, and

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supplies, as well as teachers' additional salary payments, all of which are cost prohibitive for many impoverished families. (3,7,11,13,33,34) Long distances between villages and schools, and lack of schools, classes, and teachers, are also significant barriers to education. (5,11) In addition, many children in Mali are not registered at birth, which may prevent them from accessing services such as education. (3,7,33,35) Research indicates that there are hundreds of thousands of children in Mali without birth certificates, and that while lack of documentation does not exclude children from schooling, these students may not be allowed to take national exams. (5,11) Evidence also suggests that incidences of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, including corporal punishment, prevent some children from remaining in school. (19,33) Furthermore, internally displaced children faced interruptions in their education and barriers to enrolling in school after fleeing their homes. (5,11)

During the reporting period, the pandemic, teacher strikes, and insecurity due to terrorist activity significantly affected the education of hundreds of thousands of children throughout Mali. Teaching was postponed for several months due to a series of teacher strikes. (11) A second COVID-19 wave also prompted the government to close schools in 2021. Research indicates that in December of 2021, close to 1,600 schools remained closed due to insecurity, with 120 verified attacks on schools, resulting in 478,500 students without access to education, mainly in the northern and central regions of the country. (6,11)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mali 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 Mali's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 326 of the Labor Code; Article L.187 of the Law 2017-021 modifying the Labor Code (36,37)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Hazardous Occupations List; Article 1 of the 2017-4388 Amendment to Hazardous Occupations List; Articles 326 and D.189.14 of the Labor Code (36,38,39)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations List; Article 1 of the 2017-4388 Amendment to Hazardous Occupations List; Article 189 of the Labor Code (36,38,39)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article L.6 of the Law 2017-021 modifying the Labor Code; Article 1 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (37,40)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 244 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 63 of the Child Protection Code (40-42)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 228 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 57 of the Child Protection Code (40-42)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 183 of the Penal Code; Articles 18 and 50 of the Child Protection Code (41,42)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 17 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 31.23 and 31.31 of the Penal Code; Article 5 of the Military General Statute (41-43)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 17 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 31.23 and 31.31 of the Penal Code; Article 5 of the Military General Statute (41-43)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Articles 31.23, 31.31, and 32 of the Penal Code (41)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 26 and 34 of the Law of Education (44)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 18 of the Constitution (34)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (41)

In 2021, Mali worked to adopt an implementation decree for the amended Labor Code, which was sent to the Ministry of Labor, Civil Service and Social Dialogue (MOL) for signature. (11) Additionally, the National Directorate in Charge of Registering Births, Marriages, and Deaths drafted a law to permit a special session aiming to register and deliver birth certificates and other identity documents, with registrations expected to begin in 2022. (11)

The Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with UNODC, revised the 2012 Anti-Trafficking Law to provide aggravated penalties if human trafficking is committed against anyone under the age of 18, whereas previously aggravated penalties were only applied if the child was under the age of 15. However, drafts of the anti-trafficking law and the migrant smuggling law, which aims to harmonize Malian law with the UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants, remained pending. (5,7,11,14,30,45,46)

Articles 189.35 and 189.36 of the Labor Code allow children between the ages of 12 and 14 to perform domestic or light seasonal work, as long as it does not impede school attendance or exceed 4.5 hours of work per day. (36) The light work framework does not meet international standards because it applies to children under the age of 13. In addition, the law does not specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken. (37,47)

Although Mali's Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes human trafficking for the purpose of slavery, it does not more broadly criminalize the act of slavery, and Mali's Labor Code, while prohibiting forced labor generally, does not specifically prohibit hereditary slavery. In addition, Malian law does not prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs as established by international standards. (1,7,40,42)

While the Child Protection Code provides protection for children under age 18, and the Penal Code establishes criminal penalties for several of the worst forms of child labor, some offenses included in the Child Protection Code do not carry criminal penalties, such as the prohibition of military recruitment by non-state armed groups. (41,42,48) Although the Child Protection Code prohibits children under age 18 from participating in armed conflicts or joining the armed forces, it only provides for imprisonment of perpetrators in the case of repeat offenses. Meanwhile, the Penal Code only provides criminal penalties if the children are under age 15. (41,42)

Article 28 of the Penal Code states that crimes committed out of self-defense or under a force that could not be resisted should not be penalized as prescribed by the Penal Code. Although a 2013 Interministerial Circular on the Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers states that Article 28 of the Penal Code is

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applicable to children involved in armed conflict, the Circular does not define the age range of the children it covers. (41,49) This means that some children under age 18 who are affiliated with non-state armed groups may be penalized as a direct result of being a victim of the worst forms of child labor. (41,49)

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, Civil Service and Social Dialogue (MOL)	Enforces labor laws and investigates Labor Code infractions, including those regarding child labor. (13,33,50)
National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE)	Coordinates and enforces Mali's efforts to eliminate child labor, especially its worst forms. Chaired by MOL and includes representatives from other government ministries, civil society, and worker and employer organizations. (7,13,51,52) One labor inspector in each region is designated as the point of contact for CNLTE to facilitate regional coordination. (3,5,7,53)
Ministry of Justice's Special Judicial Office and Specialized Investigation Brigade	Enforce criminal laws, including those related to child labor, child trafficking, child commercial sexual exploitation, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and the use of children in illicit activities; initiate and coordinate with courts the implementation of laws related to the worst forms of child labor with the support of several other ministries, including the Ministries of Security, Territorial Administration, Child Promotion, Defense, and Labor. (3,5,11,13,25,50)
Ministry of Security's Police Brigade for the Protection of Morals and Children, and the Brigade to Fight Migrant and Human Trafficking	Investigate crimes against children, including human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (3,7,11,22) The Narcotics Brigade of the National Police (<i>Brigade des Stupéfiants</i>) is responsible for investigating the use of children in drug trafficking. (11)

The National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE) received a budget of \$55,000 (32 million CFA) in 2021. (11) During the reporting period, the CNLTE carried out several activities to address child labor, including commemorating the World Day Against Child Labor. Several awareness campaigns about slavery and artisanal gold mining were conducted, and a TV advertisement for the state cotton company encouraging producers to send children to school was produced. (11) The CNLTE provided training on child labor to unions, held a workshop for organizations involved in child labor issues, and held two meetings of the National Guiding Committee on Child Labor. The CNLTE considers its budget insufficient, given the extent and severity of the child labor problem in Mali, as it lacks funding to meet its office needs and it does not have a vehicle or fuel for its staff to carry out its mission. (5,11)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Mali took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MOL that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$123,555 (5)	\$115,000 (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	113 (5)	113 (11)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (36)	Yes (36)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (5)	N/A (11)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (5)	N/A (11)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (5)	No (11)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	571 (5)	571 (11)
Number Conducted at Worksite	571 (5)	571 (11)

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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (5)	Unknown (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (5)	85 (11)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (5)	45 (11)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (11)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (36)	Yes (36)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (11)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (11)

Research indicates that there are 15 inspectors and comptrollers dedicated to child labor issues. (11) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Mali’s workforce, which includes approximately 6.5 million workers. According to the ILO’s technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed countries, Mali would need to employ about 161 inspectors. (53,54) Although all regions have labor inspectors, government services are limited or non-existent in some areas due to the insecurity caused by the presence of non-state armed groups. (3,7,53) In addition, reports indicate that a lack of trained staff, equipment, vehicles and other transportation, and funding hampered both CNLTE and the labor inspectorate’s ability to conduct child labor inspections and legal proceedings, especially in remote areas of northern Mali. (3,13,33,53,55) Research indicates that the government rarely collects statistics on the matter, and that there is no central database to maintain any data related to worst forms of child labor. (14)

Research indicates that the reported number of child labor victims is likely lower than the actual number of victims, given the widespread nature of child labor and inadequate enforcement of child labor laws in Mali. (3,5) However, the government did not provide specific data for this report regarding the number of child labor law violations found. (11)

Criminal Law Enforcement

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

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (5)	No (11)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (5)	N/A (11)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (5)	No (11)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (5)	Unknown (11)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (5)	Unknown (11)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (5)	Unknown (11)
Number of Convictions	0 (5)	Unknown (11)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (5)	Unknown (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (11)

Research indicates that the number of law enforcement agents working for the Brigade for the Protection of Morals and Children (BPMC), 54 personnel, is inadequate given the prevalence of the worst forms of child labor in the country. (3,11) Furthermore, Mali lacks trained staff, equipment, transportation, and funding to adequately conduct criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, particularly in remote areas. (3,25,53) Reports indicate that because of political instability, which hinders labor and criminal law enforcement efforts in western and northern Mali, the prevalence of hereditary slavery, forced labor, and trafficking in persons has worsened since the conflict began in 2012. (3,13,25,33,53,56) Research showed that

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the BPMC budget was insufficient, and the force had only three vehicles to conduct inspections and very limited amounts of fuel for each quarter in 2021. Additionally, there were reports that staff did not receive office materials and had to use personal resources for official documents and furniture. (11) Research indicates that in 2021, ten children associated with armed groups were detained by the transitional government, seven of whom were released to civilian partners. Five children were still detained at the end of 2021. (6,28,57)

During the reporting period, the Brigade to Fight Against Migrant and Human Trafficking (BFMHT) saw an increase in staff to 47, up from 17 in 2020. In 2021, the BFMHT dismantled a trafficking network operating at an artisanal gold mine in Yanfolilla and also intervened in several other locations. (11) In 2021, 98 suspected human traffickers were arrested, with some of the victims being children. (11)

During the reporting period, the government did not provide information on whether new criminal investigators received initial training, whether refresher courses were provided, the number of investigations carried out, whether violations were found, whether prosecutions were initiated, the number of convictions, or imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor. In 2021, the BPMC investigated 16 reported cases of mistreatment of children working as domestic staff. (11) Many justice sector actors noted government officials' interference in cases involving slavery-related practices in an effort to have the charges dismissed. (30)

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 clarity about the roles of coordinating bodies.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices	Coordinates government efforts to address human trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Justice and includes various government agencies and civil society groups. (7,22,58,59) While the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices was active during the reporting period, research could not identify its specific activities. (14)
Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family (MPFEF)	Develops and implements programs to protect vulnerable children and monitors alleged violations of child labor laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,50,60) During the reporting period, MPFEF continued to support and manage agencies responsible for child protection. (11,13)
Interministerial Committee to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children	Led by MPFEF, conducts awareness-raising campaigns to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and implements reintegration programs for former child soldiers. (7) Conducts joint missions with international partners to determine the presence of children in armed conflict. (13,50) During the reporting period, the Committee continued to carry out its mission. (13)
Directorate for the Promotion of Children and Family (DPCF)	Led by MPFEF, coordinates issues related to child labor and child protection. Implements the National Policy for the Promotion and Protection of Children. (5,13) During the reporting period, DPCF supported agencies responsible for birth registrations and supported the process of reuniting children with their families who were affected by the crisis in the north. (11)
Artisanal Gold Mining Summit Committee	Monitors recommendations, including the ban on child labor in artisanal gold mines, from a summit on artisanal mining, and comprises gold mining associations and local government officials. (13) Research was unable to determine whether the Artisanal Gold Mining Summit Committee was active during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family's Directorate for the Promotion of Children and Family (DPCF) continued to support other government departments involved in formally registering children at birth, particularly in the north. Research indicates that children born in the midst of security crises are often unable to acquire a birth certificate. (11) Furthermore, the DPCF also worked to reunite children affected by the security crisis in the north with their families. (11)

Reports indicate that there is confusion with regard to roles and a lack of coordination between the CNLTE and the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices. (13,25,56,61)

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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 a lack of implementation of a new national child labor action plan.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2018–2022)	Aims to enhance the legal framework to prevent human trafficking, improve implementation of the laws, and provide effective protection and care for survivors. Led by the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices. (62) Calls for the establishment of a formal body to coordinate government efforts to address human trafficking and allocates a budget of \$10 million for the 5-year period, or \$2 million per year. The government has pledged to contribute \$350,000 annually and intends to mobilize development partners and the private sector to provide the remaining financial support needed to implement the plan. (27,61) During the reporting period, several anti-trafficking trainings and community outreach events were carried out. (13)
Interministerial Circular and the Protocol on the Release and Transfer of Children Associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces	Provides a framework that highlights the responsibility of the government to prevent children’s involvement in armed conflict, and to protect and reintegrate those children who become involved. (7,63-65) During the reporting period, at least 31 child soldiers were removed from armed groups. (11)
National Strategic Education Sector Plan (2017–2026)	Sets out a comprehensive map to improve the quality of and access to basic and secondary education, especially in conflict-affected areas of northern Mali. Led by the Ministry of Education and supported by international donors. (13,50) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Strategic Education Sector Plan during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (3,7,66-69)

In 2020, the National Plan to Eliminate Child Labor (PANETEM) ended. While a new PANETEM was being developed during the reporting period, it has not been finalized, and it is expected to be finalized in 2022. The CNLTE organized several regional consultations, and a national workshop to reach final approval was expected to be held at the end of 2021. (11) In November 2021, the Minister of Justice issued a statement directing all public prosecutors to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of hereditary slavery to the fullest extent of the law. (28)

The “Child Travel Card” program (*Titre de Voyage pour Enfant*), created by the DPCF in 2002, remained a part of the directorate’s efforts to address child trafficking by facilitating proper identification of children traveling within and outside Mali. Failure to show a child travel card will prompt follow-up actions to confirm whether the child is a victim of trafficking for forced labor, commercial sexual exploitation, or forced migration. (11) Research indicates that this program does not cover foreign citizens. (14)

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 inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Mali Government and NGO-Implemented Programs‡	The Education for All Program (<i>Le Programme d’Education pour Tous</i>) is funded by the Global Partnership for Education (<i>Partenariat Mondial pour l’Education</i>), which receives funding from multiple agencies, including USAID and the Government of Mali, and is implemented by the Ministry of Education. This program was active during the reporting period. (5,14) The Mali Girls Leadership and Empowerment through Education (2018–2021) (Mali GLEE), a \$15 million project implemented by Winrock International, aims to provide educational opportunities to girls by lowering barriers to education, improving girls’ safety in school and their communities, and increasing their knowledge and adoption of positive health behaviors. (5,11) Caritas Mali, an NGO that operates three reception centers in Bamako—including a center for boys—provides assistance to girls who are victims of or at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and girls living on the streets. (11)

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description
ILO-Implemented Projects to Combat Child Labor	ILO-implemented projects to address child labor and forced labor in supply chains. These projects include the Clear Cotton Project on Child and Forced Labor (2019–2022), an \$8.5 million EU and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)-funded global project to address child labor and forced labor in cotton and textile supply chains, and ACCEL Africa, a \$26.5 million Government of Netherlands-funded regional project to address child labor in gold mining and cotton supply chains. (11,53,70-72) The South-South Project on Decent Work (<i>Programme Sud-Sud sur le Travail Décent</i>) is funded by Brazil (\$400,000) and its implementation by ILO started in 2020. The program aims to provide labor inspection training and capacity building to labor inspectors and improve working conditions in cotton production areas by promoting decent work principles and providing social protections to producers. (5)
National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Program	\$25 million UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali-implemented program that aims to provide reintegration services to former combatants in Mali, including children. (7,65) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Program during the reporting period.
Global Action Against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT)	\$13 million EU-funded global project implemented by UNODC, UNICEF, and IOM to address human trafficking and migrant smuggling. (73,74) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the GLO.ACT during the reporting period.
Foreign Government and Company-Implemented Programs	Fighting Child Labor in the Value Chain of the Cotton, Clothing, and Textile Industries (<i>Lutte contre le Travail des Enfants dans la Chaîne de Valeur Coton, Textile, et Habillement</i>) is a project funded by the EU and FAO and implemented by the ILO between 2018 and 2022. The project reinforces the national legal framework for addressing child labor and forced labor in the cotton sector. (5) The project includes mapping the supply chain of cotton and clothing, taking into account gender considerations. It also includes a quantitative survey of child labor and forced labor in the cotton sector, and involves activities and policies at the local, regional, and national levels. (5) Promoting the Principles and Fundamental Rights in the Cotton Supply Chain Work Environment (2018–2022) was extended until 2022, and is a project funded by Inditex, a Spanish multi-national company working in the cotton sector. This project targets cotton producers in the cotton-producing region of Sikasso and aims to promote a favorable work environment for the protection of fundamental worker rights. (5,11) Includes awareness campaigns and trainings for relevant partners, local associations, and community leaders to develop a monitoring system to ensure respect for fundamental worker rights in the cotton sector. The program also promotes women's rights and women's leadership in cotton producer organizations and cooperatives. (5) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Foreign Government and Company-Implemented Programs during the reporting period.
U.S. Government-Funded Programs	USDOS-funded program to Combat Descent-Based Slavery implemented by the American Bar Association and ILO to address hereditary slavery and forced child labor in Mali. (2,11,30,75,76) The project aims to improve knowledge and awareness of slavery and slavery-based discrimination, increase access to economic empowerment, and strengthen policy, laws, and implementation mechanisms to address slavery and slavery-based discrimination. (11)

† Program is funded by the Government of Mali.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3,7,77,78)

During the reporting period, Mali continued to carry out a national survey on child labor, which began in October 2020 and is expected to be completed in February 2022. (11) In 2021, the transition government funded an NGO-run training of 60 Koranic teachers (*marabouts*) on addressing trafficking in persons to raise awareness on the issue, and the transition government also conducted a training for community leaders and *marabouts* in the capital city, Bamako. (28) In collaboration with the UN, the transition government trained soldiers and law enforcement authorities on how to treat child soldiers as victims and to refer them to the appropriate rehabilitative centers. (28)

While Mali does not fund or participate in programs to address child labor in domestic work, forced begging, or commercial sexual exploitation, it provides in-kind and financial support to NGOs working on these issues. (13,79)

In August 2021, both factions of the Platform armed group signed action plans with the UN to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers, committing to releasing children and supporting their reintegration with their families and back into society. (11,80)

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An informal referral mechanism exists among NGOs, UN bodies, police, and other government agencies to allow withdrawal of children from armed conflict and to provide social services to survivors of the worst forms of child labor. (3,53,61) Despite these efforts, reports indicate that resources and facilities available to social services agencies are inadequate. (3,5,33,53)

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 Mali (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that draft anti-trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling laws are finalized and adopted.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that the Labor Code establishes a minimum age no younger than age 13 for light work and specifies the conditions under which light work may be undertaken, in accordance with international standards.	2015 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits hereditary slavery.	2017 – 2021
	Criminally prohibit the use, procurement, or offering of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs, in accordance with international standards.	2009 – 2021
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups and in any armed conflict.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that the specific ages of children protected by the Interministerial Circular on the Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers are in compliance with international standards, and ensure that children under age 18 are not penalized as a result of being subjected to forced recruitment into armed conflict.	2009 – 2021
Enforcement	Increase labor inspectorate funding and resources, including equipment and transportation to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of northern Mali.	2012 – 2021
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2012 – 2021
	Ensure that there are sufficient enforcement officials throughout the country and that they receive additional training, transportation, and equipment necessary to adequately enforce laws related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2019 – 2021
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including whether refresher courses were provided to labor inspectors, and the number of child labor violations found.	2010 – 2021
	Collect child labor statistics regularly, and create a database to track data on the worst forms of child labor.	2021
	Ensure that children are not imprisoned for their association with armed groups.	2020 – 2021
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement, including whether new criminal investigators received initial training, whether refresher courses were provided, as well as the number of investigations, violations found, and prosecutions initiated, and whether penalties for violations of the worst forms of child labor were imposed.	2020 – 2021
	Implement the provisions of the Interministerial Circular and the UN-signed Protocol, which require that children in detention for their association with armed groups be transferred to social services or to UN child protection agencies for appropriate reintegration and social protection services.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement efforts related to child labor are properly funded and resourced.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that government officials are held accountable for interference in legal cases related to crimes concerning the worst forms of child labor, including in cases of slavery and the recruitment and use of child soldiers.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor are prosecuted and convicted in accordance with the law.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that the government does not support non-state armed groups that recruit children into their ranks.	2020 – 2021
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2012 – 2021
	Clarify roles for coordinating mechanisms addressing child labor, and improve coordination among relevant agencies.	2010 – 2021
Government Policies	Ensure that the National Plan to Eliminate Child Labor is implemented, including by allocating sufficient financial and human resources.	2012 – 2021
	Publish activities undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor during the reporting period.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that the Child Travel Card program also covers foreign citizens.	2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including girls and those living in conflict-affected areas, by removing school-related fees, expanding school infrastructure, increasing teacher availability, providing free school supplies, and taking measures to ensure the safety of children and teachers in schools.	2010 – 2021
	Increase birth registration rates to ensure that children have access to social services, including education.	2010 – 2021
	Ensure that the military and non-state armed groups do not occupy schools.	2018 – 2021
	Institute new programs to address child labor in all relevant sectors, including domestic work, forced begging, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that government social services have sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care for survivors of the worst forms of child labor, including for children subjected to forced begging and children used in armed conflict.	2016 – 2021

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