

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED POLICY AND PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2021, Mauritania made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In January 2022, the Ministry of Labor and Professional Education enacted a decree creating a hazardous work list, identifying 44 forbidden activities.

Further, in a major shift in policy, anti-slavery non-governmental organizations were formally registered, allowing them to operate officially and legally. Lastly, Mauritania reported for the first time the number of labor inspections conducted. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Mauritania is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement a policy and a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. Although there were indications of progress, criminal law enforcement authorities did not make adequate efforts to address slavery and its vestiges during the reporting period. In addition, since 2011,

the government has required proof of marriage and biological parents' citizenship for children to obtain a birth certificate. As a result, children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and Sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including those of slave descent, have been prevented from being registered at birth. Because birth certificates are required for enrollment in secondary school in Mauritania, children as young as age 12 cannot access education, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Children in Mauritania are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in herding cattle and goats. The government did not make sufficient efforts to enforce some laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including laws on hereditary slavery. In addition, a lack of financial resources and mitigation measures intended to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited the government's ability to fully implement policies. Furthermore, social programs to address child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem. Moreover, the government did not publish comprehensive information about its labor law enforcement efforts.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritania are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in indentured and hereditary slavery. (1-4) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in herding cattle and goats. (1,5-7) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritania.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	19.7 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	15.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		72.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, 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 2015 (MICS), 2015. (9)

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	Herding† and caring for cattle, camels, goats, and sheep (1,5,7,10-12)
	Harvesting fish and shrimp,† including accompanying fishermen on boats† and selling fish (1,5,7,10,13-16)
Industry	Crushing gravel† (13,17)
	Construction† (7,10)
Services	Domestic work† (1,5-7,10,18,19)
	Working as car mechanics,† painters, and carpenters† (1,5-7)
	Garbage scavenging (1,6,19)
	Street work, including vending, shoe shining,† begging,† and in the transportation sector (1,5-7,10,13,19)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging,† sometimes as a result of criminal gang recruitment and coercion by Koranic teachers (1,5,7,10,14,18,20)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,6)
	Use in illicit activities, including the production and transportation of drugs (4,6,19,21)
	Indentured and hereditary slavery (1-4,7,10,11,21-23)
	Forced labor in domestic work† (5,7,10,19,21)

† 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 Mauritania, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, continue to be exploited as slaves and endure slave-like practices, particularly in rural and remote areas of the country. Some children are born into slavery; others are born free but remain in a dependent status and are forced to work with their parents for their former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. (3-6,22) Enslaved children herd animals, such as cattle and goats, and perform domestic labor. (3,4,7,10,16,17) Young girls from poor families of Haratine, Wolof, Halpulaar, and Soninké communities are sometimes forced to work as domestic servants in Mauritania’s urban areas. (7)

In Mauritania, it is a traditional practice to send children to Koranic teachers (*marabouts*) to receive an education. However, some Koranic teachers force their students (*talibés*) to beg on the streets for long hours and to surrender the money they have earned. (4,7,10,14,18,21)

Mauritania requires proof of marriage and a copy of the national identity cards of the parents or caregivers to obtain a birth certificate. This may have prevented children born out of wedlock and many Haratine and Sub-Saharan ethnic minority children, including from families of slave descent, from being registered at birth. (7,19,24,25) Although all families are required to register children for birth certificates, research found that the civil registration process, including obtaining birth certificates, is confusing and time consuming. Moreover, applicants have faced additional hardship due to the closure of registration centers outside the capital and a lack of training for registration center staff. (24-27) In early 2021, Mauritania canceled the requirement for students to possess a national identity card to take part in the national examinations to obtain the Certificate of Primary Education Studies (CEP). However, national identity cards are still required to take exams necessary to enroll in high school. (7,12,16) Because both birth certificates and the CEP are required to enroll in secondary school in Mauritania, many children as young as age 12 cannot access secondary education, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (6,10,11,19,25,28)

To address some of these challenges, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family (MASEF); and the National Child Protection Council have established representation in all regions in Mauritania, and work to identify cases of citizens—including children—who are unable to register birth certificates, and provide them with the support needed to complete the registration process. (29) The government also appointed a special committee, headed by a presidential adviser, to review cases of unregistered applicants and facilitate documentation processes for marginalized and vulnerable communities. As part of the committee’s efforts to facilitate documentation processes, its members have conducted site visits to civil registration centers during which they have provided support to individuals who have encountered difficulty in the civil registration

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process. (29,30) During the reporting period, the government continued to collaborate with UNHCR to issue birth certificates to Malian refugee children. (10,14,18,31,32)

In Mauritania, the lack of school infrastructure and limited availability of teachers, especially in rural areas, also impede access to education, which may increase children's vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor. (5,7) In addition, children from families of slave descent, especially from the Haratine ethnic minority, face barriers to accessing education due to ethnic discrimination. (11,22,33) Furthermore, refugee children may have difficulty accessing education or finding available classrooms, which makes them particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (4,7,10,12,34,35)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mauritania has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

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

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mauritania's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including with the compulsory education age.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 76 of the General Child Protection Code (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 76 of the General Child Protection Code; Article 247 of the Labor Code (27,36)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 76 and 77 of the General Child Protection Code; Article 4 of the List of Hazardous Work Forbidden to Children (27,37)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1, 3, and 4 of the 2003 Anti-Trafficking Law; Article 1 of the 2013 Law Against Slavery and Torture Crimes; the 2015 Bill modifying the Anti-Slavery Law (38-40)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1 and 3 of the 2003 Anti-Trafficking Law; Article 54 of the Penal Protection Code for Children; Articles 2 and 4 of the 2020 Law Regarding the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Victim Protection; Articles 18, 43, and 67 of the 2020 Law Regarding the Fight Against Migrant Trafficking (38,41-43)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 72 and 76 of the General Child Protection Code; Article 1 of the 2003 Anti-Trafficking Law; Articles 24–26 of the Penal Protection Code for Children; Article 2 of the 2020 Law Regarding the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Victim Protection (27,38,41,42)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3–5 and 14 of Law 93-37 on the Prohibition of Production, Trafficking, and Use of Drugs and Illicit Substances (44)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of the 1962 Military Recruitment Law (45)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 43 of the Penal Protection Code for Children (41)
Compulsory Education Age	No	14	Article I of the Basic Education Law (46)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article I of the Basic Education Law (46)

* Country has no conscription

In January 2022, the Mauritanian Ministry of Labor and Professional Education (MEFP) enacted a hazardous work list. The list identified 44 types of activities that are prohibited for children, including street vending, domestic work, and stone crushing. (12,37) In addition, in January 2021, the government adopted a new NGO Law (No. 2021-004) to ease NGO registration requirements and move oversight of NGOs operating in Mauritania from the Ministry of the Interior to the Commissariat for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Civil Society Relations. (7,47,48) In October 2021, the government adopted implementation procedures for the law, and in December 2021, the NGO Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA) was officially registered by the government. (49) The IRA had been previously blocked from being registered and its members were arrested. (50) Several other human rights NGOs working on non-slavery issues were also officially registered, and have begun to operate officially. (49-51)

The Labor Code allows children ages 12 and older to perform light work as long as it does not impede their school attendance, does not exceed 2 hours per day, and is authorized by the Ministry of Labor. (36) However, the Labor Code does not specify the activities in which light work may be permitted. (52) In addition, children in Mauritania are required to attend school only up to age 14. This standard makes children ages 14 through 16 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school but are not legally allowed to work. (27,46)

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 Professional Education's Directorate of Labor and Inspection	Enforces labor laws and investigates labor code infractions, including violations related to minimum wage and hazardous work. (33,53)
Ministry of the Interior's Special Brigade for Minors	Investigates crimes against children, including human trafficking, and monitors religious schools (<i>mahadras</i>) to ensure that children are not forced to beg on behalf of their teachers. Mainly operates in the capital, Nouakchott. (6,33,54) During the reporting period, continued to employ 30 officers. (7)
Ministry of Justice's Directorate of the Judiciary for the Protection of Children	Assists with the enforcement of child protection issues and oversees tribunals responsible for sentencing offenders of laws related to children. (17)
Anti-Slavery Courts	Prosecute crimes related to slavery and provide free legal assistance to victims, including children. Located in Nema, Nouakchott, and Nouadhibou. (4,55-57)
National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH)	Serves as an independent ombudsman body that advocates for the eradication of slavery, receives human rights complaints, and conducts investigations on human rights violations, including the worst forms of child labor. (6,7,33)

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During the reporting period, the Ministry of Interior created the Central Office for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking. This unit is tasked with disrupting irregular migration, and actively searching for trafficking indicators among migrants. (12,49) In November, the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) conducted an informational campaign caravan on anti-slavery laws in the northern region of the country in collaboration with the local authorities, the NGO *SOS Esclaves*, and the UN Human Rights Office. (49)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Mauritania took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MEFP 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	\$33,300 (10,58)	\$33,300 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	72 (58)	233 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (36)	Yes (36)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (58)	Yes (51)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (10)	Yes (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (10)	Yes (51)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (10)	570 (7)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10)	570 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (10)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	N/A (10)	Unknown (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (36)	Yes (36)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10,58)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (7)

In 2021, the government hired an additional 161 new labor inspectors. (7) New inspectors receive training on the Labor Code, child labor laws, and on all labor-related conventions the country has ratified. (58) During the reporting period, labor inspectors also received training on child protection issues and on the new List of Hazardous Work Forbidden to Children. (7) Mauritania carried out 570 inspections; this is the first time that these data have been provided for inclusion in this report. However, none of the inspections were carried out in the informal sector, in which child labor is known to occur. (7)

Research found that the MEFP lacked equipment, training, transportation, and funding to conduct inspections, especially in remote locations and in the informal sector, which employs more than 40 percent of the workforce. (5,7,53,59,60) The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, and whether routine inspections were targeted for inclusion in this report. (10)

Labor inspectors prepare reports when they find a labor violation and may include a recommendation for a penalty, but they are not empowered to assess penalties; they then are required to file the reports with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). The MOJ, in turn, assesses the penalty for the violation. (7,16)

During the reporting period, the MASEF, in coordination with the MEFP and UNICEF, organized roundtables nationwide to sensitize against child labor and promote the role of inspectors in deterring child labor. Also during the reporting period, the Federation of Artisanal Fisheries organized two campaigns in Nouadhibou and

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Nouakchott to sensitize fishing communities on the importance of protecting children from apprenticeship activities in the fishing sector. (7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritania 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 investigation and prosecution of criminal cases related to hereditary slavery.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (10)	No (7)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (10)	No (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (10)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	N/A (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Violations Found	N/A (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (10)	Unknown (7)
Number of Convictions	0 (10)	2 (12)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (10)	Unknown (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (7)

During the reporting period, the UNODC coordinated four 5-day training sessions that covered identifying, investigating, and prosecuting human trafficking cases. Trainings benefited a total of 56 magistrates, 18 gendarmes, 14 police officers, and 14 representatives of civil society. (49) Furthermore, the MOJ established legal aid offices throughout the country, tasked with providing legal assistance to trafficking victims. The legal aid offices are managed by representatives from the local government, MASEF, and the Mauritanian Bar Association. (49) However, efforts made by criminal law enforcement authorities to address the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery, remained inadequate given the magnitude of the problem. (61) Research indicates that some police, prosecutors, and judges do not investigate cases of slavery in response to complaints, and that the government has prosecuted cases as lesser offenses to avoid bringing a slavery case to trial. In some cases, this may be due to corruption, lack of political will to prosecute suspected slaveholders, or misunderstanding of the 2015 Anti-Slavery Law. (7,14,61,62) There are also reports that investigative judges who receive anti-slavery cases unlawfully dismiss cases by civil society organizations representing victims of slavery, and that they may try to pressure victims to drop their cases, accept mediation in lieu of prosecution, or reclassify cases as a lesser crime. (10,15,59,60,63) In addition, there are reports that some cases of slavery are resolved through social mediation rather than through the criminal justice system. (14,21)

During the reporting period, the Anti-Slavery Courts handed down two convictions for slavery-related offenses and processed five cases overall. (7,12) Enforcement authorities, including the Anti-Slavery Courts, lack personnel, funding, and training to adequately coordinate and enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,4,11,14,55,57,59,64,65) Slavery victims also encounter obstacles when filing complaints, including pressure from judges to drop their complaints. The government's failure to adequately investigate these cases may be due to the insufficient allocation of resources for prosecutions or to a lack of training for judicial officials. (15,59,60,63) During the reporting period, criminal and anti-slavery courts were closed for several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a decline in total cases processed. (49)

The government did not provide information on the number of investigations, number of violations found, number of prosecutions initiated, number of convictions, or imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this report. (7) Furthermore, research found that there was little to no coordination among enforcement agencies. (15,66)

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 inclusion of all relevant agencies to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and the Family (MASEF) Office of Childhood	Develops and implements programs to protect vulnerable children and to monitor alleged violations of child labor laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Manages the Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children. (6,53) The Ministry continued to run seven children's shelters during the reporting period. (7)
Human Rights Inter-Ministerial Committee	Created in 2020, and led by the Prime Minister with bimonthly meetings planned. Tasked with coordinating anti-trafficking efforts, implementing the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons, carrying out USDOS Trafficking in Persons Report recommendations, and monitoring the human rights situation in the country. (7,16,20,49) The Committee met at least once during the reporting period. (12)
Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee on Human Rights	Coordinates and monitors government efforts to promote human rights in Mauritania, including those related to UN CRC. Led by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Civil Society Relations and includes representatives from <i>Taazour</i> , CNDH, and other ministries. (53,67) The Technical Committee was active during the reporting period. (12)
Commissariat on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Civil Society Relations	Coordinates the development and implementation of government policies related to human rights, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (4,53,68,69) Carries out awareness-raising campaigns to combat slavery and human trafficking and acts as a semi-autonomous body under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister, which is also a member of the Human Rights Inter-Ministerial Committee. (4,16,53,68,69) As part of the new government's restructuring, the mandate of the National Agency to Combat the Vestiges of Slavery, Integration, and Fight Against Poverty's (<i>Tadamoun</i>) to act as a civil party on behalf of victims of slavery was transferred to the Commissariat on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Civil Society Relations. (14,30,70) In 2021, the Commissariat led the Inter-Ministerial Committee, which met twice. (49) It also worked with the Mauritanian Association for Maternal and Children's Health (AMSME) to operate a hotline for human trafficking and gender-based violence. The hotline has been operational since 2020, and AMSME reported that 546 people called and benefitted from services. The Ministry of Social Affairs also ran radio and television advertisements to promote the hotline. (49)
National Child Protection Council (NCPC)	Aims to develop and implement policies and programs to eradicate all forms of violence against children, including child labor. Chaired by the Prime Minister's adviser on social affairs, includes government and civil society stakeholders that address children's rights. (26,63,71-74) During the reporting period, NCPC met regularly. (12)
General Delegation for National Solidarity and the Fight Against Exclusion (<i>Taazour</i>)	Coordinates and implements government programs to provide social cohesion, education, economic opportunity, and health services to vulnerable and marginalized populations, including communities of slave descent. (14,75-77) During the reporting period, the government continued to fund <i>Taazour</i> . (49)

During the reporting period, the Commissariat on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Civil Society Relations funded six awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking in partnership with anti-slavery NGOs such as *SOS Esclaves* and *Flambeau de la Liberté*. (49) Between April and July of 2021, the Commissariat also organized 15 workshops with 760 participants to raise awareness and train administrative, judicial, and security authorities. The trainings touched on several criminal law enforcement topics, including Mauritania's legal and institutional framework for combating human trafficking; Mauritania's national commitments to combatting human trafficking; the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2020–2022); the establishment of the National Authority to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants; and the complaints mechanism of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Relations with Civil Society. (49) In June, the Commissariat organized a roundtable discussion on the application of the anti-slavery law with participants that included UNHCR, the ILO, the MOJ, the CNDH, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court, the presidents of specialized anti-slavery criminal courts, and CSO representatives. Recommendations from the sessions included: appointing someone at the MOJ to be a point of contact on all slavery-related cases, as well as more training sessions for those charged with implementing the anti-slavery law. (49) Additionally, the MOJ, the Commissariat on Human Rights, and the ILO created a follow-up committee to ensure that slavery cases were processed and recommendations from the June roundtable were implemented. (49)

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From June 9 to 13, the Union for the Republic—President Ghazouani’s ruling political party—held workshops throughout the country that discussed slavery. The workshops not only allowed for open debate on the issue, but they also helped spread awareness about the country’s anti-slavery laws. (49)

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 funding.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development (SCAPP) (2016–2030)	Aims to reduce poverty, promote sustainable development, and increase access to fundamental social services. Overseen by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development. (78,79) Integrates strategies to increase birth registration and access to compulsory education, strengthen social protection systems for children, and support efforts to combat slavery, including its vestiges. (78) During the reporting period, the government held a regional and a national workshop to evaluate and further define the second phase of the SCAPP. (12)
National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2020–2022)	Adopted in March 2020, aims to address forced child labor, forced child begging, forced prostitution, slavery, and other forms of child exploitation. Overseen by the Commissariat on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Civil Society Relations with a budget of \$145,946 (5.4 million MRU) for implementation. (20,80) During the reporting period, the government carried out trainings on trafficking in persons, and ran awareness campaigns for government officials and civil society. (12)
National Child Protection Strategy (2020–2025)	Aims to protect children against violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Specifically includes children exploited at work and victims of human trafficking, children living on the streets, and children who are victims of violence or sexual exploitation. (10,81) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Child Protection Strategy during the reporting period.

While the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor (PANETE-RIM) ended in December 2020, the government and the ILO approved a draft PANETE-RIM II in December 2021, which will replace the original plan. (7) Efforts to implement most of the key policies related to child labor continue to be delayed due to insufficient allocation of resources. (12,15,63,82,83)

Mauritania continues to be a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7, an international partnership with 22 member countries, and facilitated by the ILO Secretariat. This involves a commitment toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of forced labor, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labor by 2025. (84)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Program to Eradicate the Effects of Slavery†	Government program that supports the reintegration and rehabilitation of former slaves. (85) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Program to Eradicate the Effects of Slavery during the reporting period.
Cash Transfer <i>Tekavoul</i> (2015–2025)†	A \$45 million <i>Taazour</i> program, supported by the World Bank, the Adaptive Social Protection Program for the Sahel, and co-financed by the German and Mauritanian governments. Provides cash assistance to families with school-age children, conditioned on children’s school attendance. (58,76,77) Was extended for an additional 5 years and allocated an additional \$72 million in 2020 to reinforce efforts in the social protection system. (58) Contributes to the G5 Sahel’s Emergency Development Program, as part of new phase. (58) During the reporting period, about 200,000 households in extreme poverty benefited from the program, and 100,000 households were provided with free health insurance. (12)
Centers for the Protection and Social Integration of Children†	MASEF-operated program that provides short-term food, shelter, education, and vocational training to vulnerable children, many of whom are <i>talibés</i> . Operates seven centers in Aleg, Kiffa, Nouadhibou, Rosso, and Nouakchott. (5–7) With financial support from an NGO, managed seven centers around the country in 2021, offering short-term protection and social integration services to vulnerable children, including potential human trafficking victims. (7)

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

Program	Description
Model <i>Mahadras</i> Program†	Ministry of Islamic Affairs-funded program that provides monthly cash transfers of approximately \$27 to parents whose children are enrolled in model <i>mahadras</i> . Also operates adult literacy classes for 8,000 religious leaders (<i>imams</i>) across Mauritania to raise awareness of children's rights, including information on child labor and child trafficking. (21) The Ministry continued to implement the Model <i>Mahadras</i> Program during the reporting period. (12)
UNICEF Country Program (2018–2022)	A \$13.8 million UNICEF-funded program that supports government efforts to improve education, birth registration rates, social inclusion, and protection for children, including refugees. The program was active during the reporting period. (10,12,86)
Decent Work for Migrant Youth in the Fishing Sector (2017–2024)	A \$17 million ILO- and Government of Germany-funded project that aims to promote decent work among youth working in the artisanal fishing sector in Mauritania by reaching at least 9,000 recipients and conducting an analysis of child labor in the fishing sector. ILO continued to implement the program during the reporting period, and the program was extended to 2024. (10,12)
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL-funded global projects implemented by ILO to support global and national efforts aimed at countering child labor and the forced labor of adults and children. Include From Protocol to Practice: A Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labor (The Bridge Project); and the Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAP 16) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor (2019–2021), a \$300,000 program. (14,87,88) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.

† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritania.

Although Mauritania has social programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, especially in agriculture, herding, domestic work, and for children in hereditary and indentured slavery. (7,14,15,53) Moreover, some government officials do not acknowledge that slavery continues to exist. (2,3,21,53,64,89) In addition, the lack of recent data on slavery limits the government's ability to develop effective social programs to comprehensively address this issue. Existing social programs for formerly enslaved persons and awareness of the national laws on slavery are insufficient. (2)

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 Mauritania (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be permitted.	2015 – 2021
	Raise the compulsory education age to align with the minimum age for work.	2018 – 2021
Enforcement	Publish complete information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor law violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, and whether routine inspections were targeted.	2019 – 2021
	Increase training and resources for labor and criminal law enforcement agencies, including the Anti-Slavery Courts, to adequately enforce labor laws, especially in remote areas and in the informal sector.	2010 – 2021
	Increase efforts to ensure that cases of the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary slavery and forced begging, are investigated and prosecuted in accordance with the law.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that judicial sector officials have the proper training and awareness of slavery issues, and that they do not improperly dismiss or fail to refer appropriate cases to the Anti-Slavery Courts.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that information on criminal law enforcement efforts and data are collected and published each year.	2020 – 2021
	Increase collaboration and coordination between labor and criminal law enforcement agencies.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that key policies related to child labor receive sufficient resources, including funds, for effective implementation.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Program to Eradicate the Effects of Slavery during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021
	Expand the scope of programs to address child labor, including in agriculture, herding, and domestic work; and the worst forms of child labor, including hereditary and indentured slavery.	2009 – 2021
	Implement a continuous awareness-raising program for government officials on the laws related to slavery and the worst forms of child labor.	2012 – 2021
	Conduct research and collect data on slavery to inform the development of effective policies and programs to identify and protect children who are at risk.	2010 – 2021
	Increase funding for social programs that provide services to formerly enslaved persons.	2015 – 2021
	Ensure that all children are able to obtain birth certificates to increase their access to secondary education and reduce their vulnerability to the worst forms of child labor.	2016 – 2021
	Increase funding dedicated to school infrastructure and teacher availability, especially in rural areas, to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including those from families of slave descent and refugees.	2011 – 2021

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