

In 2021, the Philippines made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government launched an online hotline for reporting cases of online sexual exploitation of children and opened its first Cyber-Trafficking in Persons Monitoring Center in response to the substantial increase of online commercial sexual exploitation since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The government also launched the Child Protect Mobile app, which raises awareness about violence against children, including child labor, and provides information on public and private organizations that provide intervention services. In addition, the government committed \$800,000 to implement its anti-trafficking program and increased funding for its Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking by \$200,000, which was applied toward surveillance, rescue operations, and victim assistance efforts. Although the government made meaningful efforts during the reporting period, it did not adequately protect children allegedly engaged in drug trafficking from inappropriate incarceration or physical harm during detention. Children in the Philippines are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in armed conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and gold mining. Moreover, the enforcement of child labor laws remained challenging throughout the country, especially due to the low number of labor inspectors and the lack of a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.



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

Children in the Philippines are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in armed conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and gold mining. (1,2) The Survey on Children indicated that 2.1 million children ages 5 to 17 engage in child labor, of whom approximately 2 million engage in hazardous work. (3-5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in the Philippines.

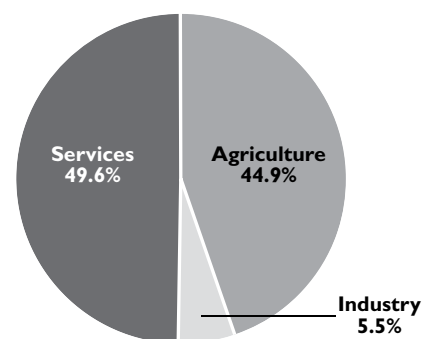
**Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	2.0 (466,708)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	2.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		105.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2019. (7)

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of sugarcane,† including growing, weeding,† harvesting,† cutting,† and carrying sugarcane bundles† (1,2,8)
	Growing bananas, coconuts, corn, rice, rubber, and tobacco (2,11)
	Hog farming (10,12)
	Deep-sea fishing† (2,8,13)
Industry	Mining† and quarrying,† including for gold (1,2,13,14)
	Manufacturing pyrotechnics† (2,8,13)
	Construction,† activities unknown (2,8)
	Production of fashion accessories (1,2)
Services	Domestic work (1,2,17,18)
	Street work, including scavenging, selling flowers, and begging (1,4,8,19)
	Scavenging in dumpsites† and in rivers (2,13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,4,20-22)
	Forced labor, including domestic work (1,2,22,24)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (1,25,26)
	Forced begging (1,4,8,27)

† 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 from rural communities, primarily girls, are subjected to trafficking domestically in urban centers and tourist destinations for the purposes of domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. (2,24,28) While evidence indicates that the availability of child sex trafficking victims in commercial establishments declined in some urban areas, child sex trafficking remains a pervasive problem, typically abetted by taxi drivers who have knowledge of clandestine locations. (28) Traffickers also lure children from remote areas in Mindanao and other regions by using tourist visas available in Middle Eastern countries, where many Filipinos work in household service jobs, and then sell the children to employment sponsors who exploit them. (24,28-30) Traffickers are able to circumvent the Government of the Philippines and destination countries’ regulatory frameworks for foreign workers and evade detection by using student and intern exchange programs and fake childcare positions. In addition, traffickers take advantage of porous maritime borders to avoid detection. (28)

Research indicates that the Philippines remains one of the top global Internet sources of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), which continues to be a highly profitable and growing sector due to increased access to Internet connectivity. There were 2.8 million reports of OSEC in 2021, compared with 1.3 million reports received in 2020. (2) Although most of the cases were not actionable due to multiple submissions or erroneous reporting, 268 OSEC investigations were launched in 2021, compared with 73 cases in 2020. (2) In cases of OSEC, children are induced to perform sex acts at the direction of paying foreigners and local Filipinos for live Internet broadcasts that usually take place in small Internet cafes, private homes, or windowless dungeon-like buildings commonly known as “cybersex dens.” (1,18,22,24,28,31-33) Increasingly, women have been found to be perpetuating OSEC crimes, motivated mostly by financial incentives, with data indicating that upwards of 87 percent of OSEC cases involve a female trafficker known to the victims, most commonly the mother. (24,31,34) In October 2021, for instance, Philippine police arrested a 39-year-old woman and rescued two minors from an operation of online sexual exploitation. (35)

A report released in 2020 concluded that the Philippines had become a global hub for OSEC due to high international and domestic demand, vulnerabilities in the financial system, and gaps in existing legislation. (24,36)

Recruitment of child soldiers by non-government militias and terrorist organizations, predominately on the southern island of Mindanao, remains a concern. (1,4,8,22,25,26,28,33,37) Research also shows that these non-state armed groups, including the New People’s Army, the Abu Sayyaf Group, and the Bangsamoro Islamic

Freedom Fighters, continue to recruit children—sometimes by force—from schools for use in combat and non-combat roles, including as human shields, cooks, and fighters, while offering religious education and material incentives to join. (1,8,18,22,24,28,33,37) In addition, the Islamic State reportedly subjects women and girls to sexual slavery. (28) In 2021, 10 children were recruited or used in armed conflict by non-state forces, including the following: New People’s Army, Dawla Islamiyah, and Abu Sayyaf. Some of the child-victims were forced to serve in combat or non-combat roles, like medic, supply officer, or errand-runner. (2) The Government of the Philippines continued to convene formal coordination meetings with the UN on incidents of grave violations against children to facilitate appropriate responses to such situations. (1,22,38)




According to results from a 2020 survey on child labor, children were found working on sugarcane plantations and rice fields in Luzon; as vendors, tricycle drivers, and carwash crew in Cavite; as plastic and paper scrap scavengers in Caloocan City; and as factory workers for slipper production in Laguna. Children from areas impacted by Typhoon Haiyan in Visayas in 2013 were reportedly forced to work as domestic helpers and as “traffic enforcers” to aid in high-construction areas post-typhoon, while children from indigenous communities in Mindanao worked on corn plantations. (4,39) Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority, in conjunction with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), found that of 1.4 million domestic workers, more than 50,000 were minors, and 4,900 of them were under age 15. It also reported that 95 percent of all child laborers were found to be engaging in conditions of hazardous work. (4,17) The Philippine Statistics Authority included a child labor module in the October 2017 to 2020 rounds of the Labor Force Survey, the results of which were released during the reporting year. (2)

Although the Constitution establishes free, compulsory education through age 18, unofficial school-related fees, such as for school uniforms, are prohibitive for some families. Other barriers to education include substandard infrastructure, which makes traveling and access to schools challenging, especially for children in rural areas, and architectural barriers that pose challenges for children with disabilities. (33) The 2019 Functional Literacy and Mass Media Survey showed a decrease in school-age children not attending school—from 10.6 percent in 2013 to 5.7 percent in 2019. The Philippine Statistics Authority estimates that more than 10 million persons ages 6 to 24 were not attending school in 2019. (2)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Philippines 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 the Philippines' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including having the minimum age for work below the compulsory education age.

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 137 of the Labor Code as renumbered; Section 12 of the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Section 16 of the Act Instituting Policies for the Protection and Welfare of Domestic Workers (40-42)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 137 of the Labor Code as renumbered; Section 12-D of the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (41-43)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Department Orders 149 and 149A on Guidelines in Assessing and Determining Hazardous Work in the Employment of Persons Below 18 Years of Age; Sections 12-D and 14 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (8,42-45)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 4 and 5 of the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (43,46)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 3(a), 4(k), 5, and 10 of the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (43,46)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 11 of the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Section 4 of the Anti-Child Pornography Act; Section 4 of the Cybercrime Prevention Act (43,47-49)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act; Sections 5 and 8 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act (43,50)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 12 of the Providing for the Development, Administration, Organization, Training, Maintenance and Utilization of the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes Act (51)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Section 14 of the Providing for the Development, Administration, Organization, Training and Maintenance and Utilization of the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes Act (51)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (43)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Section 4 of the Enhanced Basic Education Act (52)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 2 of the Philippine Constitution (53)

\* Country has no conscription (51)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (52)

For a fourth year, the Government of the Philippines reportedly continued reviewing proposed amendments to Republic Act No. 9231 that would: (a) increase the minimum age of employment from age 15 to age 16, (b) devolve the issuance of child work permits to local government units, (c) institute stricter working hours for children, (d) mandate that part of the money legally earned by children be set aside in a trust fund, (e) authorize DOLE to determine the types of non-hazardous agricultural employment or work that children ages 16 to 18 can perform, and (f) design a holistic intervention program for children working in the informal economy. (1,4,8)

During the reporting period, the government proposed amendments to several House and Senate Bills dealing with the worst forms of child labor, but no legislative bill has been filed yet. This includes two bills related to human trafficking: House Bill No. 8295, which is an act to institute policies to eliminate trafficking in persons,

especially the trafficking of women and children, and establish institutional mechanisms to protect and support trafficked persons; and Senate Bill No. 2449, which aims to strengthen protection against trafficking in persons and reorganize the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking to include additional agencies. There also are two bills related to OSEC: House Bill No. 8760, which aims to strengthen the protection of children from OSEC by providing treatment for victims and penalties for unlawful acts constituting OSEC; and Senate Bill No. 2209, which will provide protection to children from OSEC and set up a National Coordinating Center Against OSEC. Lastly, House Bill No. 10235 would provide uniform night work prohibition by children under age 18. (2,54)

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. (33)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE): Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) and Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC)	Manages the labor inspection program that oversees inspections conducted by DOLE regional offices nationwide, including enforcement of child labor laws. BWC also oversees training of labor inspectors, manages the DOLE Labor Inspection Management Information System, and responds to queries and complaints on labor standards and working conditions, including complaints on child labor, received through the DOLE 1349 hotline. (2,55) Inspects establishments and monitors compliance with labor laws in the formal sector. (56) BWSC oversees the Profiling Child Laborers Initiative. (1,57) Mandated to develop policies, programs, and systems that champion the development and protection of disadvantaged workers by contributing to their decent and productive employment. Provides advisory and technical assistance to the Labor Secretary and regional offices. (58) During the reporting year, along with the World Vision Executive Director, signed a MOU that seeks to strengthen regulations and policies on the worst forms of child labor, specifically online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) and hazardous working conditions. (59) In addition, reactivated the Isabela City Anti-Child Labor Council in honor of the 2021 World Day Against Child Labor. (60)
Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)	Provides services for child-victims and survivors of the worst forms of child labor. (2) In December 2021, in partnership with the Department of the Interior and Local Government, signed a Joint Memorandum to enhance the 911 hotline, making it more accessible and more inclusive for victim-survivors of violence against women and children. (2) In November 2021, through its Strategic Helpdesk for Information Education Livelihood and Other Developmental Interventions program, provided educational assistance to 6 municipalities in Antique province aimed at addressing child labor issues, in which each of the 100 beneficiaries received \$565 (3,000 Philippine pesos) for school supplies and other needs. (2)
Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams ( <i>Sagip Batang Manggagawa</i> )	Detects, monitors, and rescues child laborers in hazardous, exploitative, or extremely abject working conditions. (2,8,27,61,62) An inter-agency, quick reaction mechanism that is chaired by DOLE-BWSC. (2,4)
Criminal Law Enforcement Agencies: Philippine National Police (PNP), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)	PNP investigates and prosecutes cases related to the worst forms of child labor. (2,4) PNP's Women and Children's Protection Center (WCPC) enforces laws on child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, and has 269 personnel nationwide. (24) NBI investigates and prosecutes child labor cases and operates a national Task Force on the Protection of Women Against Exploitation and Abuse and a Task Force on the Protection of Children from Exploitation and Abuse. (8,24) Oversees the Anti-Human Trafficking Division, which investigates trafficking and illegal recruitment nationwide. (22) PDEA enforces the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, maintains a national hotline for reporting cases of children used in illicit activities, and coordinates with the DSWD to assist during rescue operations. (8,4)

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**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)**

Organization/Agency	Role
Cybersecurity Law Enforcement Agencies: National Telecommunications Commission, Dept. of Justice–Office of Cybercrime, Philippines Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC), Dept. of Information and Communication Technology–Cybersecurity Bureau	National Telecommunications Commission enforces the Anti-Child Pornography Law. Coordinates with internet service providers to block websites containing pornographic material involving children. (47,63) Department of Justice–Office of Cybercrime receives CyberTips reports from the U.S.-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children regarding potential OSEC cases, conducts initial investigation into CyberTips, prioritizes cases, then sends cases to PNP's Internet Crime Against Children Center for follow up. (64) Comprises legal and investigative divisions. (64) PICACC aims to combat the online sexual exploitation of children. Comprises the PNP-WCPC Anti-Human Trafficking Division and NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division and aims to coordinate WCPC and NBI investigation of Internet crimes against children. (24,38,65) Coordinates international investigations with the United Kingdom's National Crimes Agency (UK NCA) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP). (21,22,65-67) Receives funding from the UK NCA, AFP, and the U.S. Government. (54,68) In 2021, completed 58 successful OSEC operations. (54) Department of Information and Communication Technology–Cybersecurity Bureau provides preventative technological assistance to law enforcement and protects cybersecurity of Filipino citizens. (69) Oversees an anti-OSEC program comprising awareness-raising programs, computer software, website monitoring, cybersecurity, and a visible Internet application, a form of artificial intelligence that allows for remote screen access. Shows an educational anti-OSEC video for communities, in collaboration with the Philippines Online Corporation. (69) Coordinates efforts with the Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography and consults with telecommunications companies and civil society organizations to produce the National Cybersecurity Strategy. (49,69,70) Oversees CyberSafePH, an awareness campaign and capacity-building program with a 3-year roadmap aimed at combating OSEC and cyberbullying. (22,28,71) In February 2021, in partnership with ECPAT Philippines, launched an online hotline to report OSEC cases. (72)

From January to September 2021, DOLE identified 152,084 child laborers: 121,506 were referred to other agencies for the provision of necessary services, 7,784 were provided with necessary services by DOLE, and 21,935 were removed from child labor. (2)

A lack of resources, including staff and a centralized database for tracking illegal recruitment and human trafficking, is an area of concern within law enforcement agencies because it impedes their ability to act quickly on complaints of child labor, including OSEC, in both investigations and prosecutions. (22,28)

### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in the Philippines took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of DOLE that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the authority to assess penalties.

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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4,240,743 (55)	\$3,657,520 (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	710 (4)	1,210 (2)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (41)	No (41)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	13,974 (4)	58,363 (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	13,974 (4)	58,363 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	4 (4)	5 (2,72)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	4 (4)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (41)	Yes (41)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (2)

From January to September 2021, DOLE's inter-agency quick action team that detects, monitors, and rescues child laborers led 10 rescue operations and removed 18 children from child labor. Since its inception in 1993 until October 2021, the DOLE quick action team has rescued 3,639 child laborers. (2)

During the reporting year, DOLE hired 500 additional contractors to assist in the inspection of priority establishments, including workplaces that performed hazardous work and employed children. (2,73) DOLE has requested that these contractor positions be converted to regular inspection positions. DOLE Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) noted that in 2021 it was unable to inspect all workplaces due to inadequate staffing. (2) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of the Philippines' workforce, which includes approximately 42 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, the Philippines would employ about 2,852 labor inspectors. (8,74,75)

An additional \$3.6 million was allocated to the BWC regional offices for administrative expenses, including for labor inspector travel and transportation costs, trainings, information system enhancement, personal protective equipment, and cellular data plan subscriptions. However, this funding does not include a budget for the salaries of the labor inspectors working outside the National Capital Region. (2) Despite these allocations, enforcement of child labor laws remained challenging due to the lack of resources for inspections and the limited number of inspectors, especially in rural areas where many vendors are unregistered and highly mobile. (1,8,13,27) The BWC also acknowledged that more specialized training on child labor is needed to enhance labor inspectors' ability to readily identify and act on child labor situations. (1,4)

From January to November 2021, DOLE-BWC inspected 58,363 establishments, which is an uptick from the decline in 2020. All inspections and assessments were conducted in the presence of the employer and employee representatives. (2) Scheduling routine inspections is based on the national target set by the DOLE Central Office. Regional offices implement inspections based on factors such as prevailing industries and geographical areas. (1,2,57) Despite this, enforcement of child labor protections is not sufficient for children employed in the informal sector and in small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in agriculture and fishing, due to DOLE's lack of capacity and resources. (1,4,8,24,33,76) The Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams are permitted to conduct unannounced compliance visits to video karaoke bars, massage parlors, saunas and bathhouses, and farms, but they are not authorized to conduct visits to private homes to search for underage child domestic workers. However, there are mechanisms available to *barangay* (village level) officials to permit them to investigate domestic work-related complaints. (1,4,8)

The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts related to the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed or collected.

### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Philippines took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Philippine National Police (PNP) that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including ineffective or slow court proceedings.

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Number of Investigations	41 (4)	93 (2)
Number of Violations Found	87 (4)	125 (2)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	70 (4)	70 (2)
Number of Convictions	55 (4)	53 (2)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (4)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (2)

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During the reporting period, the government continued its anti-drug campaign, which began in 2016, and did not adequately protect children allegedly engaged in drug trafficking from inappropriate incarceration or physical harm. (4,77,78) The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) continuously monitored children involved in drug trafficking. From January to October, PDEA indicated that it rescued 522 minors ages 4 to 17 during anti-drug operations nationwide and identified 2,377 children between ages 9 and 17 as drug pushers, 963 as possessors, 434 as users, 229 as drug den visitors, 16 as drug den employees, 9 as drug den maintainers, 2 as cultivators, 1 as a clan lab employee, and 2 as runners. (2) PNP reported its referral of these children to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), after which they were placed in either juvenile detention centers or Houses of Hope, which, in practice, closely resemble detention centers. (8, 33,79)

Children also continued to be victims of extrajudicial killings during operations carried out as part of the anti-drug campaign. (2) There were reports of collateral deaths of children caught in the crossfire during police operations connected to the drug war, with some high-level government officials suggesting that killing suspected drug traffickers and users was necessary to wipe out drug-related crime, increasing the vulnerability of children being used in the drug trade. (1,80-81) According to a children's rights NGO, 18 children were victims of extrajudicial killings during law enforcement operations between January and June 2021. (2) While there appears to be no prosecutions or convictions of law enforcement officials accused of extrajudicial killings of children, the government reported that it began investigating killings during police operations during the reporting period. In October 2021, the DOJ indicated that it would review more than 6,000 killings during police operations that were part of the drug war. (82) This decision indicates a shift from the Philippines government's defense of the drug war, which comes after the United Nations and International Criminal Court put pressure on the government to investigate practices used during the drug war. The government released details of 52 deaths related to drug war. (82) However, no cases have been filed by the Philippine DOJ against erring policemen. (82)

Philippine law allows judges to award civil compensation to human trafficking victims from damages arising from being trafficked, but victims rarely receive this restitution since perpetrators often lack sufficient assets to pay. However, in cases for which perpetrators are financially able to pay this penalty, many are able to evade doing so due to ineffective, slow court procedures. (24)

Research indicates the need for more law enforcement personnel, funds for operations, and equipment for forensic analysis of digital evidence due to the high volume of cybercrime tips related to child sexual exploitation received by the Office of Cybercrime each month. (28,33) Slow-moving courts, the need for additional training on handling digital evidence, a lack of understanding regarding the legal framework, and too few prosecutors also hindered the effective and timely prosecution of human trafficking crimes. (18,24,28,30)

Moreover, prosecutors and law enforcement received training on OSEC in a 3.5-day training session that taught them how to effectively conduct cases and build investigations on rescue and entrapment operations of cases involving OSEC. The International Justice Mission, with the assistance of Interagency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), also provided OSEC training through live webinars to 61 prosecutors and law enforcement professionals, which included topics like OSEC fundamental concepts and maximizing digital evidence in OSEC prosecution. (2,54)

## IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).



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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Council Against Child Labor (NCACL)	Formerly the National Child Labor Committee and reorganized after the signing of Executive Order No. 92 in 2019. Chaired by DOLE and co-chaired by DSWD. (2,4,22,24,83-86) Expanded membership includes 19 government agencies and organizations. (2,84) Coordinates national efforts to combat child labor and implements the Philippine Program Against Child Labor. (8,62,86,87) Promotes information sharing at the national, regional, and provincial levels, and is tasked with establishing and disseminating a child labor reporting mechanism for use by local and national authorities. (1,22) During the reporting year, held four regular meetings, approved five new sectoral representatives of the council, and discussed the proposed action pledge as part of the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor. (2)
Anti-Trafficking: Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT)	IACAT coordinates, monitors, and oversees efforts to combat human trafficking, including child trafficking. Chaired by the DOJ, co-chaired by DSWD, and composed of 11 government agencies and 3 NGOs, IACAT comprises 24 anti-human trafficking task forces, including 2 national task forces, 16 regional task forces, and 6 inter-agency task forces in major seaports and airports. (2,22,24,88) During the reporting period, IACAT received a budget of \$1,710,300, which was an increase of \$312,600, with a total allotted budget of \$1,397,800. DOJ added 24 new prosecutors in 2021. (2) IACAT also increased the number of its staff from 142 to 179. Additional staff were mostly assigned to the IACAT <i>Tahanan ng Iyong Pag-asa</i> Center, NBI-Anti-Human Trafficking Division (NBI-AHTRAD), NBI-International Airport Investigative Division, and Victim Witness Coordinator. (2) IACAT also oversees the 1343 Actionline emergency hotline for trafficking-in-persons victims. (2,88) The PNP-WCPC created the <i>Aleng Pulis</i> helpline, which receives direct messages from individuals on a wide range of trafficking in persons topics. (2) In 2021, IACAT and its regional anti-trafficking task forces organized or assisted with 85 training or capacity-building activities, attended by 5,242 persons. A total of \$200,000 was allotted to the IACAT Secretariat's Confidential Fund in 2021, which provides resources for surveillance and rescue operations and victim assistance. (2)
Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography	Serves as the primary government coordinating mechanism to address issues related to child pornography. (2) Monitors and implements the Anti-Child Pornography Act (Republic Act No. 9775). (1) Comprises 12 government agencies and 3 NGOs. (87) Chaired by DSWD. (89) During the reporting year, in partnership with UNICEF Philippines, conducted two studies to enhance evidence on OSEC: (1) National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines, and (2) Philippine Kids Online Survey. (89)
Children Involved in Conflict: Inter-Agency Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) and the Inter-Agency Committee on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (IAC-CSAC)	CWC initiates, promotes, and advocates policies and measures protecting children's rights. (1,2,4) Operates and maintains the Protocol on Monitoring, Reporting, and Response System for reporting incidents of children in armed conflict, including monitoring the six grave child rights violations. (22,24,90) IAC-CSAC advocates protecting children and preventing the involvement of children in armed conflict. Chaired by the CWC. (18,22,24) Coordinates and monitors the implementation of the Children in Armed Conflict Program Framework. (38,91) Convenes quarterly. Ensures that international instruments, including the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, are referenced in discussions. (91) Formulates guidelines and develops programs in coordination with concerned agencies for the handling of children involved in armed conflict, and monitors or documents cases of capture, surrender, arrest, rescue, or recovery by government forces. Works closely with applicable agencies in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the enhanced CSAC program framework. (18,91) Conducts human rights training, advocacy and information campaigns, and capacity building of local government units. Implements a monitoring, reporting, and response system for grave child rights' violations in situations of armed conflict. (91) In October 2021, launched the Child Protect Mobile App, which provides the public information on violence against children, including information on relevant public and private organizations that provide intervention services. (2)
Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council	Leads community outreach and education efforts, through offices located throughout the country, to prevent the use of children in illicit activities, including in drug trafficking. Manages livelihood, rehabilitation, food, and scholarship programming. (79) Overseen by DSWD. (33,92) During the reporting year, held a Tik Tok Challenge aimed to inform youth on child protection laws, such as curfews during quarantine. (93)

IACAT and the National Bureau of Investigation, with the support of the UK National Crime Agency, opened the first Cyber-Trafficking in Persons Monitoring Center (CTIPMC) in the Philippines on July 22, 2021 to address OSEC. CTIPMC has 10 staff and aims to generate cases and police cyberspace to prevent it from being used as a medium for committing human trafficking. (2,54)

Moreover, the government also establish the Task Force Against the Trafficking of Overseas Filipino Workers to track trafficking cases referred by the Department of Foreign Affairs overseas missions. The Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Task Force is currently developing an Operational Handbook that will provide an effective and efficient referral mechanism for cases involving OFWs. (2,28,71) The final draft of the "Guidelines on the Investigation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Trafficking in Persons Cases Facilitated by Corruption" is now pending review with DOJ to ensure a zero-tolerance policy on trafficking-related malfeasance in government. The Manual of Operations for IACAT's *Tahanan Nang Inyong Pag-Asa* (TIP) Center is also being finalized, and contains

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all essential information on the management of victim-survivors and the entire operation of the center. (2) IACAT and International Justice Mission are co-developing a comprehensive, harmonized, and unduplicated data collection system and analysis of trafficking in persons across agencies. The initial draft of the Department Circular on the Guidelines on the Implementation of Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Modern Slavery Policy in the Department Procurement Process was presented to the DOJ-Bids and Awards Committee for comments and finalization. (2)

### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

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

Policy	Description
Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework (2020–2022)	Aims to gradually reduce child labor through consultations with government institutions, local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, faith-based groups, professional associations, academia, the private sector, parents, and children. (4,8,94) Implementation led by DOLE's BWSC. (95,96) During the reporting period, held 35 meetings to implement the plan and endorsed 5 representatives for NCAAC to the Office of the President for appointment. Also developed and approved a Communication Plan (2021-2022), which aims to increase awareness of and generate support for the campaign against child labor and the protection of rights and welfare of children, and the Strategic Plan (2020-2022), which aims to monitor the progress of this program. (2)
Anti-Trafficking Policies: National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2017–2021) and the Child Protection Compact Partnership (CPC) (2017–2021)	The National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (Third StratPlan) aimed to address labor trafficking and sex trafficking, including OSEC. (97) Chaired by the Secretary of the DOJ and co-chaired by the Secretary of the DSWD. Employs a multi-stakeholder approach to fight human trafficking. (98) Mandated to prevent and suppress human trafficking, and ensure victim recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society through four key result areas: (1) Prevention and Advocacy; (2) Protection, Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration; (3) Prosecution and Law Enforcement; and (4) Partnership and Networking. (98) In 2021, focused on two priorities: (1) developing a Task Force Manual and (2) creating a comprehensive advocacy and communication plan. (2)  CPC, a plan jointly developed with USDOS, sought to increase prevention efforts and protections for child victims of OSEC and labor trafficking, while holding perpetrators accountable. (18,31,88,99) Aimed to improve the response to child trafficking, including the live-streaming of child sexual exploitation and child trafficking for labor purposes, by increasing criminal investigations, prosecutions, and convictions; strengthening the capacity of the government and civil society to identify and provide comprehensive services for victims; and strengthening existing community-based mechanisms that identify and protect victims of child trafficking. (88,100,101) The government committed approximately \$800,000 for its implementation. (99) During the reporting year, in collaboration with the World Vision Development Foundation, trained 3,699 government stakeholders on how to prevent and respond to OSEC and child labor trafficking. (54) Program concluded in April 2021. (2)
Philippine Development Plan (2017–2022)	Aims to build the socioeconomic resilience of individuals and families by reducing their vulnerability to various risks and disasters; this includes the goal of universal social protection for all Filipinos. (5,102) During the reporting year, updated its strategy to focus on building a healthy and resilient Philippines after the pandemic, including setting a target goal of zero child laborers. (2,4,87)
National Plans: National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children (Child 21) (2000–2025), 3rd National Plan of Action for Children (2017–2022), and the Philippine National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan on Children in Street Situations	Child 21 sets out broad goals for national government agencies, local governments, and NGOs to achieve improved quality of life for Filipino children by 2025. (103) Chaired by the Council for the Welfare of Children. (8) Third National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) strengthens strategies, policies, and programs for children to achieve Child 21's vision for Filipino children by 2025. (8,38,103,104) The Philippine National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan on Children in Street Situations, established in 2020, addresses the needs and concerns of street children using a child rights approach, and strengthens multi-sectoral cooperation among stakeholders. (4) The evaluability study of Child 21 is scheduled to be conducted from August to December 2022. The study aims to determine the extent to which it can be evaluated in a credible and reliable manner prior to its termination. (73)
Philippine Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (2017–2022)	Multi-sectoral plan to gradually reduce violence against children through consultations with government institutions, local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, faith-based groups, professional associations, academia, the private sector, and parents and children. Consistent with the visions of Child 21 and the National Plan of Action for Children. (1,105) During the reporting year, implemented the plan in local areas for pilot-testing. (73)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (45,106,107)

### 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 provision of adequate services for victims of child pornography.

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

Program	Description
Anti-Child Labor Programs: Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program,† Livelihood for Parents of Child Laborers (Kabuhayan para sa Magulang ng Batang Manggagawa),‡ and Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (Conditional Cash Transfer Program)	<p>Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program is a DOLE anti-child labor program that implements local awareness-raising campaigns, institutes child labor-monitoring mechanisms, and requires neighborhoods to develop child labor elimination plans. (8) Includes a provision of livelihood assistance to parents of child laborers, <i>Sagip Batang Manggagawa</i>, and Project Angel Tree. (8,88)</p> <p>Project Angel Tree is a social service with local government agency benefactors, known as "angels," who provide educational supplies to communities. (57,108) From January to September 2021, conducted 92 gift-giving activities benefitting 7,321 child laborers and children at-risk wherein school supplies, food packs, toiletries, and other items were donated by civic organizations and private institutions that acted as "angels" of the projects. (2,72)</p> <p>Livelihood for Parents of Child Laborers is a DOLE program that provides livelihood assistance to parents, guardians, or other family members of child laborers. Seeks to prevent and eliminate child labor by providing necessary materials to start a livelihood undertaking. (2) From January–September 2021, provided livelihood assistance to 3,771 parents of child laborers, in the form of <i>Negokart</i> (business carts), starter kits, and other materials needed to start a livelihood. (2,72) Remained active during the reporting year. (72)</p> <p>Conditional Cash Transfer Program is a DSWD national poverty reduction program that provides conditional grants, local awareness-raising campaigns, and child labor-monitoring mechanisms to assist poor families with children's access to health care, adequate nutrition, and education. (1,8,24,109) Includes a child labor module within the sessions on family development for program participants. (8,27,110) Covers 1,627 cities and municipalities in 79 provinces in all 17 regions. (1,8)</p>
Strategic Helpdesks for Information, Education, Livelihood and Other Developmental Interventions for Child Laborers‡	<p>DSWD-led project implemented in 14 <i>barangays</i> in Catanauan, Labo, Jose Panganiban, Paracale, Kananga, and Ormoc City, with support from the ILO CARING Gold Mining Project. (55,57) Comprises three components: Child Labor Local Registry; Helpdesk and Convergence of Services; and Advocacy, Organizing, and Capacity Building. (8,110) Focuses on areas with a high child labor incidence rate, with interventions based on data from the Child Labor Local Registry. (110) Focused particularly on eliminating the worst forms of child labor in the small-scale gold mining, deep sea fishing, and sugarcane industries. (1,8,62,111) Nationwide implementation began in July 2021. (72)</p>
Anti-Trafficking Programs: Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP)† and Strengthening Local Systems and Partnerships for More Effective and Sustainable Counter-Trafficking in Persons in the Philippines (Strength CTIP), 2019–2022	<p>RRPTP is a DSWD and IACAT program that provides recovery and reintegration services to victims of human trafficking and raises awareness in vulnerable communities. Includes the National Referral System, which strengthens coordination among agencies providing services to human trafficking victims using standard referral and reporting forms. (24) There are 149 referral networks established in 16 regions. (27) Strength CTIP works in partnership with the Advocate for the Protection and Prevention of Abuse and Exploitation of Children Consortium. Initiates and sustains countertrafficking in persons activities in selected project sites in Iloilo City, Dumaguete City, and Cebu Province. (1) Designed to accommodate the needs of victims of human trafficking, specifically children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. (1)</p>
USDOL-Funded Projects	<p>USDOL projects in the Philippines that aim to eliminate child labor in its worst forms by improving the capacity of the national government, implementing the National Action Plan Against Child Labor, conducting research and data collection, developing strategic policies, drafting legislation, and supporting social services delivery for child domestic workers. Include: Against Child Exploitation (ACE) Project (2019-2023), a \$5 million project implemented by World Vision; BuildCA2P: Building Capacity, Awareness, Advocacy and Programs Project (2018-2023), a \$2.9 million project implemented by ChildFund International; SAFE Seas, implemented by Plan International USA; RICHES, implemented by the Grameen Foundation with the Philippines; Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAP16) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor, implemented by ILO; and CARING Gold Mining Project, implemented by ILO and concluded in 2021. (113-118) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.</p>

† Program is funded by the Government of the Philippines.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (120,121)

Although some specialized resources exist to assist victims of human trafficking, the Philippines lacked sufficient programs to care for and rehabilitate children who have been victims of OSEC. (27) In addition, there are not adequate programs to provide insight on the impact of OSEC on child victims. (38,122,123)

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DSWD works in consultation with parents and community leaders to determine how best to assist children suspected of being involved in the drug trade; however, DSWD does not have programs specifically designed to increase protections for or assistance to children engaged in drug trafficking. DSWD also lacks programming to address the heightened vulnerability of children impacted by the death of familial breadwinners in the drug war. (8,124)

PDEA continued to coordinate with DSWD when dealing with children allegedly involved in drug trafficking. From July 2016 to October 2021, Philippine law enforcement arrested 4,033 minors. (2) Upon the PDEA turning over arrested children and within 8 hours of the conclusion of their court proceedings, DSWD transferred the children to either juvenile detention centers or "Houses of Hope" (Bahay ng Pag-asa) rehabilitation and skills training centers for children in trouble with the law. (2,4,125) Local government units or NGOs operate more than 70 Houses of Hope throughout the country, with little oversight from the federal government. Although there is an accreditation process for these facilities administered by the federal Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council, only a small number of Houses of Hope have met the qualifications, allowing for continued corruption, maltreatment of residents, and failure to provide quality rehabilitative services. Reports in past years showed that many Houses of Hope operated as youth detention centers where children were subjected to physical and emotional abuse, deprived of liberty, and forced into overcrowded and unhygienic cells. (33,55,78,125-126) In two facilities, for example, there were complaints of limited access to water, insufficient amounts of food, and expired food, including a report that unused sacks of rice were infested with weevils. (55,127,128) Research, however, was unable to show whether these issues continued during the reporting year. In 2021, the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council undertook the following actions to ensure these detention centers were compliant with safety standards: conducted regular monitoring by visiting Houses of Hope; mandated registration of children in a centralized data-base system that determines program planning and policies; and began designing a Standards and Manual of Operations Guidebook to ensure detained children are provided with comprehensive programs, services, and interventions in a safe environment, which is expected to be completed by 2022. (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 the Philippines (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
Enforcement	Increase funding to allow for the hiring of more law enforcement personnel, including police and prosecutors, training for forensic analysis of digital online sexual exploitation of children evidence, and create a centralized database to allow for quicker action on cases involving the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2021
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties for child labor violations.	2015 – 2021
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice; ensure the budget for the Department of Labor and Employment, Bureau of Worker Concerns includes an allocation for the salaries of labor inspectors located outside of the National Capital Region; and increase resources available to provide sufficient coverage of the workforce, particularly in the informal sector and in rural areas where child labor is prevalent.	2014 – 2021
	Develop and provide specialized training for labor inspectors on identification of child labor.	2019 – 2021
	Allow Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams to conduct unannounced compliance visits to private homes.	2018 – 2021
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2015 – 2021
	Enhance efforts to prevent the inappropriate incarceration of, and violence against, children suspected to be engaged in the production and trafficking of drugs and those caught in crossfire during anti-drug operations.	2017 – 2021
	Prosecute law enforcement officials and civilians responsible for the killing of children engaged in the drug trade and officials who are complicit in trafficking or allow traffickers to operate without impunity.	2017 – 2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that youth rehabilitation centers, including Houses of Hope (Bahay ng Pag-asa), are accredited and in compliance with standards set by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council.	2020 – 2021
	Offer criminal law enforcement officials training on laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including the proper handling of digital evidence in criminal trials.	2020 – 2021
	Prosecute trafficking crimes in a timely manner and hire more criminal prosecutors to lessen the workload.	2020 – 2021
	Incorporate procedures to allow for efficient restitution to victims of trafficking.	2020 – 2021
Social Programs	Ensure that social programs are fully implemented, including the Strengthening Local Systems and Partnerships for More Effective and Sustainable Counter-Trafficking in Persons in the Philippines.	2020 – 2021
	Institute a program to address and combat the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the production of child pornography, including live streaming.	2017 – 2021
	Provide specialized care and rehabilitative services for children who have been victimized through sexual abuse and exploitation through live streaming and in the production of child pornography by their families.	2017 – 2021
	Develop programs to increase protections for and provide assistance to children engaged in drug trafficking and children impacted by the death of a familial breadwinner to address their heightened vulnerability.	2017 – 2021
	Ensure that Houses of Hope (Bahay ng Pag-asa) child detention centers in the Philippines do not subject children to physical or emotional abuse, that those who commit such crimes are held accountable, and that centers are provided with adequate resources to remedy overcrowding and unhygienic conditions.	2017 – 2021
	Increase access to free, compulsory education by eliminating unofficial school-related fees and addressing issues related to inadequate school infrastructure, including architectural barriers.	2020 – 2021

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