



In 2021, São Tomé and Príncipe made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government provided training for all labor inspectors on issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the 2019 Labor Code. Additional training was also provided by the International Labor Organization, including the module "Labor Inspection in Fighting Against Child Labor." Moreover, in July 2021, funding for the Family Program increased from \$10 million to \$18 million, raising the number of program participants from 3,500 to 16,000. The distribution of these funds will continue for a period of 9 months, providing stipends twice a month for the poorest families. However, children in São Tomé and Príncipe are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. The Labor Code does not apply to children working outside of a formal labor relationship, such as children who are self-employed. Moreover, limited financial resources hampered law enforcement efforts, and criminal law enforcement did not take actions to address child labor during the reporting period. In addition, policies addressing the worst forms of child labor do not exist.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in São Tomé and Príncipe are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. (1,2) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (3,4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in São Tomé and Príncipe. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	14.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	23.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		84.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (5)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2019. (6)

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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming,† including weeding and fertilizing† (3,4,7)
	Fishing,† including line and hook fishing (3,4,7)
Industry	Carpentry and woodworking (1)
	Construction† (1,3)
Services	Working in shops, restaurants, and bars† (1,3,4)
	Street work,† including begging and street vending† (1,3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation (1,2)

† 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.

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Reports indicate that children with special needs, especially those with mobility or hearing difficulties, may have limited access to education. (4)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

São Tomé and Príncipe 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 São Tomé and Príncipe's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Articles 268(2) and 269 of the Labor Code (8)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 273(2), 274, and 536 of the Labor Code; Article 171 of the Civil Code (8,9)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Work List in Annex IV of the Labor Code (8)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Articles 159 and 160 of the Penal Code (10)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 160 and 181 of the Penal Code (10)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 179–182 of the Penal Code (10)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 279, 280, and 289 of the Penal Code (10)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Legislation title unknown (11)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 1 of Decree-Law 3/83 (12)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 11 and 12 of the Basic Education System Law (13)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 12 of the Basic Education System Law (13)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (13)

The Labor Code permits children aged 14, who have completed their compulsory education, to perform light work that is not deemed harmful to their health or development; however, this framework does not establish a minimum work age and special legislation specifying the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken has yet to be adopted. (8) Furthermore, the minimum age protections contained in the Labor

Code do not apply to children working outside of a formal labor relationship, such as children who are self-employed. (8,14)

Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient as they do not criminalize practices similar to slavery or debt bondage and forced or compulsory labor. (10)

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, Solidarity, Family, and Professional Training	Enforces labor laws, including child labor. (1,15)
Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Human Rights	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor. (1,15)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in São Tomé and Príncipe took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity, Family, and Professional Training 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	\$25,000 (1)	\$23,000 (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	4 (1)	6 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (16)	Yes (16)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	N/A	No (15)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	Yes (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (1)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	60 (1)	60 (4)
Number Conducted at Worksite	60 (1)	60 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (1)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (1)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (16)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (1)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (4)

During the reporting period, two additional labor inspectors were hired by the government. There are also four assistant inspectors. (4,15) In addition, the government conducted a training session for labor inspectors on issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, while also focusing on regulations in the 2019 Labor Code. Virtual trainings, funded by the ILO, were also provided to labor inspectors in November and December 2021, including the module "Labor Inspection in Fighting Against Child Labor." (4)

Although inspections are permitted in all sectors, they are seldom conducted in the informal sector, in which child labor is more prevalent. (4) Reports also indicate that the allotted budget for the Labor Inspectorate was insufficient to cover operating costs, including office facilities, fuel, and transportation. Inspectors' lack of technical training also hinders their ability to perform their duties. (4,17)

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Children found working during inspections by labor inspectors are referred to the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Human Rights or the Directorate of Social Protection and Solidarity within the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity, Family, and Professional Training for integration and counseling services. Currently, there are three official centers for child integration in the country, and each works in partnership with the government. (1,15)

Criminal Law Enforcement

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

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (1)	No (4)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	No (1)	No (4)
Number of Investigations	0 (1)	0 (4)
Number of Violations Found	0 (1)	0 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (1)	0 (4)
Number of Convictions	0 (1)	0 (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (4)

During the reporting year, investigators lacked resources, including transportation, fuel, and other necessities to carry out investigations. (1,4)

Children found by Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Human Rights officials are referred for integration and counseling services to the Directorate of Social Protection and Solidarity in the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity, Family, and Professional Training. (1,15)

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 efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Anti-Child Labor Committee	Leads efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. (1) Led by the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity, Family, and Professional Training. (18) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken by the Anti-Child Labor Committee during the reporting period.
Directorate of Social Protection and Solidarity	Provides counseling and integration services to children found during labor inspections and criminal investigations. Within the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity, Family, and Professional Training. (1,15) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken by the Directorate of Social Protection and Solidarity during the reporting period.

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 coverage of all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Policy and Strategy for Social Protection (2014–2023)	Establishes social protection strategies aimed at protecting all Santomeans by eliminating extreme poverty over a 10-year time frame, reinforcing the rights of children, and addressing child labor. The policy does not specifically cover the worst forms of child labor present in São Tomé and Príncipe, including commercial sexual exploitation. (19) Although the National Policy and Strategy for Social Protection remained active during the reporting period, reports indicate that no activities were undertaken to implement it. (4)

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 addressing the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Support Centers†	Three government-funded centers run by NGOs, operating in areas with high concentrations of poor families, orphans, and street children. Provide household stipends to keep children in school and teach income-generating skills. (20,21) Active in 2021. (4)
Disadvantaged Mothers Program (<i>Mães Carentiadas</i>)†	Government program that provides family stipends, including food, school materials, and uniforms on an as-needed basis. The support is distributed by social workers. (22) In 2021, the government increased the family stipends to \$44 per month and changed dispersal methods; instead of the stipend being dispersed by social workers, participants are issued an ATM card and can receive their stipend every 2 months. (15)
World Bank-Funded Projects†	Includes a \$10 million 4-year Family Program, which focuses on implementing education policies and provides cash stipends of \$55 that are distributed twice a month to the poorest families; and a \$15 million 4-year Girls Empowerment and Quality Education for All Project, which was launched in 2020, aimed at providing safe learning spaces, improving school infrastructure, working with families and communities to empower girls with relevant life skills, and increasing school readiness for both boys and girls by boosting education, particularly within the areas of literacy and numeracy. (1,23,24) In 2021, the World Bank increased funding for the Family Program from \$10 million to \$18 million, thus increasing the number of program participants from 3,500 to 16,000. The distribution of these funds began in July 2021 and will continue for a period of 9 months. (4,25) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Girls Empowerment and Quality Education for All Project.
Decent Work Country Program (2018–2021)†	Government program in collaboration with the ILO that aimed to address child labor through legislative action and strategic programs. (7,26) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Decent Work Country Program during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Although São Tomé and Príncipe has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the problem, especially in agriculture.

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 São Tomé and Príncipe (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 the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2021
	Establish by law a minimum age at which light work may be undertaken and adopt legislation defining the activities and conditions permissible for light work.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits practices similar to slavery or criminally prohibits debt bondage and forced or compulsory labor.	2021
	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children who are self-employed.	2015 – 2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data identifying risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents, and ensure that inspections are conducted in the informal sector in which child labor is known to occur.	2017 – 2021
	Provide labor inspectors with adequate technical training to strengthen their ability to perform their duties and ensure that they are equipped with the necessary resources to conduct inspections, including sufficient office facilities, fuel, and transportation.	2009 – 2021
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including data regarding imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that criminal investigators are equipped with the necessary resources, including transportation, fuel, and other necessities to carry out investigations, and ensure they receive initial training and refresher courses to better address violations of the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2021
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2020 – 2021
Government Policies	Adopt policies to address the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Policy and Strategy for Social Protection and that data on these activities are published.	2021
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2021
	Increase access to education for children with special needs, including creating programs that address children with mobility and hearing difficulties.	2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement all programs, including the Girl Empowerment and Quality Education for All project and the Decent Work Country Program, and publish data on these activities during the reporting period.	2020 – 2021
	Implement programs that specifically target child labor in agriculture.	2010 – 2021

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