

In 2021, the Solomon Islands made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government developed a National Education Action Plan for 2021–2025 and held consultations on the process to accede to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons. However, children in the Solomon Islands are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the harvesting of palm oil fruits. The minimum age for work does not meet international standards, and the Solomon Islands has not established a minimum age for hazardous work or delineated the types of work considered hazardous for children. In addition, there is no law that makes education compulsory, which increases children's vulnerability to child labor exploitation. The government also did not publish labor and criminal law enforcement data for the reporting year.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Solomon Islands are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-3) Children also perform dangerous tasks in the harvesting of palm oil fruits. (2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Solomon Islands. 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	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		85.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (4)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2022. (5)

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	Working on plantations, including harvesting palm oil fruits (2,6)
	Harvesting seafood, including diving in deep water (2,3,6)
Industry	Alluvial mining† (2,3)
	Furniture construction (2,6)
	Construction on roads and buildings, including making bricks (2,6)
Services	Domestic work, including working as cooks (2,3,6)
	Scavenging for cans and metal in garbage dumpsites, streets, and streams (2,6,7)
	Working in nightclubs, casinos, and motels (6–8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,6,7,9,10)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the cultivation and trafficking of drugs (2,3,6)
	Forced domestic work, including working as cooks (6–8)
	Forced pickpocketing (3)

† 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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In the Solomon Islands, the commercial sexual exploitation of both boys and girls is prevalent near logging camps; near or aboard fishing vessels; and at hotels, casinos, and entertainment establishments. (1,3) Children are also forced to assist in manufacturing and transporting drugs such as betel nut and marijuana. (2,3) Children in the country are vulnerable to forced labor in the agriculture sector and in harvesting seafood. (3) Children are exposed to toxic pesticides on palm oil plantations while tending to, harvesting, and collecting palm oil fruits. (2) In addition, children—mainly boys—are exposed to extreme water depths and temperatures while diving for sea cucumbers. (2,3,6,8) The government provides free education up to grade nine as part of the Fee- Free Basic Education Policy. (11) However, despite the Fee-Free education policy, schools continue to charge fees to cover costs. (8) Moreover, teacher absenteeism, and transportation limitations also make it challenging for some children to access education. (6,8) There are no nationally representative data available on the prevalence and nature of child labor in the Solomon Islands.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Solomon Islands has ratified some 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 Solomon Islands' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for hazardous work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	12	Article 46 of the Labor Act (12)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No		Articles 47–49 of the Labor Act. (12)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 47–49 of the Labor Act (12)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 6 of the Constitution; Articles 251 and 256 of the Penal Code; Articles 70-79 of the Immigration Act (13,14)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 70-79 of the Immigration Act; Article 145 of the Penal Code (14,15)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 136, 141, 143, and 144 of the Penal Code (14)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A†		

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

† Country has no standing military (16)

The Solomon Islands' hazardous work prohibitions do not comply with international standards that require all children under age 18 to be protected from work that could jeopardize their health and safety. While the Labor Act prohibits all children under age 18 from working at night and regulates work in mines and on ships, it does not clearly establish a minimum age for hazardous work or delineate the type of work considered hazardous for all children. (1,12) In addition, the legal framework does not prohibit dangerous work in scavenging or in agricultural activities for which there is evidence of children being exposed to injuries, extreme temperatures, or chemicals. (2,12) The minimum age for work is not in compliance with international standards because the Labor Act permits children as young as age 12 to work. (12) The Penal Code includes heightened penalties if an offense is committed against a child, but has insufficient prohibitions against child trafficking because the transfer of children is not criminalized. (10,14) The law also does not criminally prohibit the use of children in illicit activities. (6) In addition, education is not compulsory, which increases children's vulnerability to child labor exploitation. (17) Although there are no laws that provide free basic education, the Fee-Free basic education policy does provide free basic education for children up to grade nine. This policy does not cover all costs, and still allows schools to request some fees. (2,11,18)

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 Commerce, Industry, Labor and Immigration	Enforces child labor laws. (6,8) Through its Immigration Division, leads efforts to address human trafficking, including the trafficking of children. (2,19)
Royal Solomon Islands Police	Enforce criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor. (8) Lead investigations of internal human trafficking cases and currently chair the Anti-Human Trafficking Advisory Committee (AHTAC). (10,20)
Business Monitoring Joint Agency Committee	Monitors and investigates cases of transnational human trafficking, specifically in the logging industry. Comprises representatives from the Immigration Division, the Royal Solomon Islands Police, Customs, and the Forestry Division. (21)

While the Government of the Solomon Islands has agencies to enforce child labor laws, research found that the agencies' commitment, coordination, and priorities vary widely depending on their mandates, structural capacity, and budget allocations. (2,6)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in the Solomon Islands took actions to address child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (12)	Yes (12)

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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (6)	Unknown (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (12)	Yes (12)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)

The Government of the Solomon Islands did not respond to requests for information related to its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. Insufficient resources likely hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws, including a lack of budget transparency and enforcement efforts. (2, 17) While the number of labor inspectors is unknown, according to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, Solomon Islands would need to employ roughly 9 labor inspectors as its workforce consists of over 361,000 workers. (22)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in the Solomon Islands took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (6)	Unknown (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (6)	Unknown (2)

The Government of the Solomon Islands did not respond to requests for information related to its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (2)

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 lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Anti-Human Trafficking Advisory Committee (AHTAC)	Coordinates efforts across the government to address human trafficking. (23) Comprises representatives from the Ministries of Commerce, Industries, Labor, and Immigration (MCILI); Finance; Health and Medical Services; Police, National Security, and Correctional Services; Women, Youths, and Cultural Affairs; the Office of the Public Solicitors; law enforcement agencies; NGOs; and UN agencies. MCILI acts as secretariat. (23) Research was unable to confirm if the committee met during the reporting period.
National Advisory and Action Committee on Children (NAACC)	Coordinates government and NGOs to address child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. (24) Comprises representatives from several ministries, including the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs; MCILI; and the Ministry of Home Affairs. Several NGOs participate, including Save the Children, UNICEF, and WHO. (25) Research was unable to determine whether the NAACC was active during the reporting period.

The Government of the Solomon Islands did not respond to requests for information on its coordination efforts to eliminate child labor. (2)

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 Action Plan Against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling (2020–2025)	Establishes a coordinated effort to eliminate human trafficking and people smuggling on the Solomon Islands. Led by AHTAC. (7,23) In August 2021, the Government of the Solomon Islands and non-government counterparts met for a national consultation to support the process of acceding to the UN Convention against Transnational Crime and to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons (TIP Protocol). The consultation reaffirmed the Solomon Islands' commitment to the National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling. (2)
Fee-Free Basic Education Policy	Subsidizes school fees for grades one through nine to increase access to education. (25,26) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy during the reporting period.
National Education Action Plan (2016–2030)	Provides free primary and secondary education to boys and girls. (27) During the reporting period, the government developed the National Education Action Plan for 2021–2025 that translates the objective of the education plan for implementation across the education sector. (28)
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	A multinational strategic framework, comprising 14 South Pacific nations. Created to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. (29) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (29)

The Government of the Solomon Islands did not respond to requests for information regarding its policies to eliminate child labor. (2) Child labor prevention and elimination strategies do not appear to be integrated into the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy. (26) Research did not find evidence that the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking and People Smuggling contains policies to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. (23)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that the government funded or participated in social programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.

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 Solomon Islands (Table 10).

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Table 10. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2014 – 2021
	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2014 – 2021
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2021
	Raise the minimum age for employment to comply with international standards.	2009 – 2021
	Establish age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work.	2009 – 2021
	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, including the types of work for which there is evidence of hazards, such as in scavenging and agriculture.	2009 – 2021
	Establish by law an age up to which education is compulsory that extends to the minimum age for employment.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the transfer of children for the purpose of child trafficking.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2011 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2021
Enforcement	Establish by law free basic public education.	2018 – 2021
	Publish information on child labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, the number and type of labor inspections conducted, violations found, information about the training system for labor inspectors, and penalties imposed and collected.	2009 – 2021
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of child labor investigations initiated, the number of child labor penalties imposed, and the number of criminal law enforcement convictions secured.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure agencies address issues with commitment, coordination, priorities, structural capacity, and budget allocations to enable them to enforce child labor laws.	2020 – 2021
	Publish data about reciprocal referral mechanisms between labor and criminal authorities and social services.	2021
	Ensure the number of labor inspectors in Solomon Islands meets the ILO's technical guidance.	2020 – 2021
Coordination	Publish information about child labor-related training for labor inspectors and criminal investigators.	2021
	Publish information on coordination mechanisms and efforts undertaken to address child labor.	2020 – 2021
Government Policies	Adopt a policy via the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking and People Smuggling that addresses all worst forms of child labor, including using children in commercial sexual exploitation.	2016 – 2021
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy.	2014 – 2021
	Publish activities undertaken to implement the National Education Action Plan, the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy, and the United Nations Pacific Strategy.	2018 – 2021
Social Programs	Implement and fully fund programs to address and eliminate child labor—especially in the agriculture sector—and the worst forms of child labor.	2018 – 2021
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2021
	Eliminate barriers to basic education, including by improving access to school transportation and eliminating school-related fees.	2014 – 2021

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