

In 2021, Togo made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government created a new National Commission Against Trafficking in Persons and passed a new Labor Code that strengthened enforcement mechanisms. In addition, the government waived school fees for the 2021–2022 school year for all secondary school students due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, children in Togo 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 domestic work. The government has not devoted sufficient resources to address child labor, and in 2021, the budget for the labor inspectorate declined by nearly 40 percent. In addition, the government does not publish data related to its criminal enforcement efforts with regard to laws on the worst forms of child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Togo 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 domestic work. (1-3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Togo. 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	29.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	86.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	29.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		88.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2013–2014. (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 in agriculture, including spraying pesticides and handling fertilizers (1,2,6) Herding animals (2,7)
Industry	Working in gravel quarries and sand mines, including excavating, crushing rocks, sifting gravel, using machinery, and carrying heavy loads† (2,7,9) Construction (8) Production of charcoal (2)
Services	Domestic work† (1,2,10) Begging and working as vendors and porters in the markets, sometimes carrying heavy loads† (2,5,8,9) Work as motorcycle repairmen (8,11,12) Garbage scavenging (8,11) Working at restaurants, sometimes at night (2)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging (9,11) Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,3,13) Forced labor in agriculture, including in the production of coffee, cocoa, and cotton; in mining; in mechanic shops; in domestic work; in quarries; and in markets (3,10,14)

† 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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Togo is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking. Children from Benin and Ghana are trafficked to Togo for forced labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, while Togolese children are often trafficked to neighboring West African countries, where they are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in agriculture and domestic work. (3,15,16) Children are also trafficked within Togo, primarily for domestic work, work in agriculture and markets, and commercial sexual exploitation. (6,16,17) The rural areas in central and northern Togo are major source regions for child trafficking. Traffickers illicitly and deceptively recruit children by promising impoverished parents lucrative employment for their children. (3,16) In addition, in a practice known as *confiage*, parents sometimes send their children to live with a friend or relative in a larger town or city. These children are often not sent to school and are subjected to labor exploitation and sexual abuse. (2,10,14) Research suggests that the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may have led to an increase in children subjected to labor and sexual exploitation. (16)

While free public primary education is guaranteed under Togolese law, due to funding shortages, some primary schools charge supplemental fees to pay volunteer teachers not employed directly by the government. (18) Free education is not yet guaranteed at the secondary level. As a result, there is a significant decline in school enrollment between primary and secondary school, leaving children vulnerable to child labor. (19,20) In 2021, in response to the impact of the pandemic, the government announced that school fees would not be collected for public secondary schools for the 2021–2022 academic year. (2,21) Even when school fees are not charged, associated costs—including uniforms, books, and school supplies—make education prohibitively expensive for many families. (6,18,22,23) Research found that insufficient numbers of schools; poor school infrastructure, including inadequate sanitation and lack of access to toilets and water; physical and sexual violence; and long travel distances to school pose additional barriers for some children, especially in rural areas. (2,18,19,22,24)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Togo 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 Togo's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of guaranteed free basic education.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 192 and 193 of the Labor Code; Article 262 of the Children's Code; Article 881.1a of the Penal Code (25-27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 192 and 193 of the Labor Code; Arrêté 1556 Determining Dangerous Work Forbidden for Children (27,28)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 263 and 264 of the Children's Code; Articles 319.9 and 882 of the Penal Code; Articles 192 and 193 of the Labor Code; Articles 1–11 of Arrêté 1556 Determining Dangerous Work Forbidden for Children (25,27-29)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 7 and 192 of the Labor Code; Articles 264 and 411 of the Children's Code; Articles 150.3 and 151 of the Penal Code (25-27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 192 of the Labor Code; Articles 2–6 of Law No. 2005-009 Suppressing Child Trafficking in Togo; Articles 264 and 411–414 of the Children's Code; Articles 150.3, 151, 317–323, and 882 of the Penal Code (25-27,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 192 of the Labor Code; Articles 264, 276.f, and 387–390 of the Children's Code; Article 224 of the Penal Code (25,27,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 192 of the Labor Code; Articles 264, 276.i, and 405 of the Children's Code; Articles 317.7, 319.9, and 329.8 of the Penal Code (25,27,29)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 426 of the Children's Code; Article 42 of Law No. 2007-010 Regarding the General Statute of the Togolese Armed Forces (25,31)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 426 of the Children's Code; Articles 146.14, 147.11, and 342 of the Penal Code (25,26)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 426 of the Children's Code; Articles 146.14, 147.11, and 342 of the Penal Code (25,26)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 35 of the Constitution; Article 255 of the Children's Code (25,32)
Free Public Education	No		Article 35 of the Constitution; Law No. 97-16 For the Creation of a Support Fund for Education; Décret 2009-129/PR for the Abolition of School Fees in Pre-Primary and Primary Schools (32-34)

* Country has no conscription (31)

In 2021, Togo adopted a new labor code that strengthened enforcement and penalty mechanisms. (27) While Togo's Arrêté 1556 prohibits several types of hazardous work for children under age 18, it still permits children as young as age 15 to perform some hazardous tasks, such as transporting heavy loads. This permission violates Article 3(3) of Convention 138, which permits children as young as age 16 (but not age 15) to perform hazardous tasks as long as their health, safety, and morals are fully protected, and they receive adequate training. (28,35,36) In addition, the law provides for free schooling only through primary school, while basic education is a total of 9 years and includes 3 years of lower secondary school. The failure to provide for complete free basic education may increase the risk of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor. (32-34)

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 Civil Service, Labor, and Social Dialogue (MFPTDS)	Conducts labor inspections and enforces all labor laws, including child labor laws. (2) Runs a Committee for Social Reintegration of Children. (6) Through its Unit to Combat Child Labor, withdraws children from child labor situations, raises awareness, and collects data. (37)
Ministry of Justice and Government Relations	Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor and prosecutes violators. (2,6,37)

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Social Action, Promotion of Women, and Literacy (MASPFA), Director General for the Protection of Children	Raises awareness on child labor issues, enforces laws against the worst forms of child labor; provides technical assistance, and leads government efforts to address child trafficking. (2,12,16) Supports a network of 42 foster families in 4 regional capitals. (38) Operates the Allô 1011 hotline for reporting child abuse, including child trafficking. (3,38,39) Accepts reports to Allô 1011 via SMS text message, through a mobile application, or through a real-time interactive website. In 2021, received 31,333 calls to the Allô 1011 hotline, of which 2,036 were substantive and 38 were related to child trafficking or exploitation. (2,16) In 2021, undertook training on child trafficking and protection that included 214 participants and launched sensitization campaigns that reached approximately 8,000 people via radio broadcast. (2)
Ministry of Security's General Directorate of Judicial Police	Investigates crimes involving child victims, including child trafficking. Operates as part of the National Police in all five regions of Togo. (2,6,40)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Togo took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Dialogue (MFPTDS) 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	\$73,162 (6)	\$39,061 (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	128 (6)	123 (2)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (29)	Yes (27)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (6)	No (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (6)	N/A (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (6)	N/A (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	819 (41)	Unknown (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	250 (41)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	22 (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	8 (35)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (35)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (35)	Unknown (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (29)	Yes (27)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (2)

The MFPTDS lacks sufficient resources for fuel and transportation, which may hinder its ability to conduct inspections. (2,41) From 2020 to 2021, the labor inspectorate's total budget declined by nearly 40 percent. (2) Routine inspections were conducted in the formal sector; however, the majority of child labor occurs in the informal sector, in which inspectors are legally allowed to inspect, but rarely do. (8,29) Although they are legally permitted to do so, inspectors did not inspect private farms or homes, in which children work in agriculture and domestic work. (2,27) The government did not provide information on the numbers of labor inspections conducted, inspections conducted at worksites, child labor violations found, penalties imposed, penalties collected, or the targeting of routine inspections for inclusion in this report.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Togo took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies, including deficient structures for investigation and prosecution planning.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (6)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (6)	Unknown (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	N/A (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	Yes (6)	Yes (2)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts, including on the number of investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and penalties imposed, for inclusion in this report. Investigators lacked the resources to adequately enforce the law. (2)

Assize Courts in Lomé and Kara handle all human trafficking cases, but research indicates that the courts are overburdened and slow, which deters victims from participating. While there is a referral mechanism between criminal law enforcement and social services, shortcomings exist in the coordination between police, social workers, and the justice system during the prosecution process. (16) An NGO reported that trafficking survivors are often reluctant to testify or assist with prosecution because their family members were complicit in the trafficking case. (16) Cases involving child trafficking may be settled outside of court due to difficulties gathering evidence. In addition, Ministry of Justice officials may be reluctant to impose fines or prison sentences in cases in which parents are involved due to a fear of perpetuating the poverty that originally led them to violate child trafficking laws. (6,9,38)

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 insufficient allocation of financial resources.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor	Serves as the coordinating government body for child labor issues. Includes representatives from 17 ministries and NGOs. (2) Was active during the reporting period promoting the 2020–2024 National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (PANLTE). (2)
National Commission Against Trafficking in Persons*	Responsible for drafting and implementing a national plan of action against trafficking in persons. Created in 2021 as a coordinating body to address and prevent trafficking in persons. (2,16)
National Committee for the Reception and Social Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking (CNARSEVT)	Manages anti-child trafficking efforts, acts as the government's central hub of information for human trafficking in Togo, and drafts an annual report providing data on human trafficking, which is sent to the Economic Community of West African States. (3,16) Housed under the Ministry of Labor and includes representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Health, Security, and Foreign Affairs. (2,13) Conducted awareness-raising campaigns for Arrêté 1556, which revised the list of prohibited hazardous work for children, and for the 2020–2024 National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (PANLTE). (16,41)
Federated Bodies	Includes 84 community-based child protection entities. Holds community dialogues to raise broad child abuse issues—including child trafficking—and to identify and implement programming such as awareness raising, counseling, and reporting. (3,35) Research was unable to determine the activities of these entities during the reporting period.

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

Research suggests that despite receiving funds from the ILO, UNICEF, and Expertise France, the National Committee for the Reception and Social Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking faced operational challenges due to lack of financial resources. (16)

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V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (PANLTE) (2020–2024)	Taking a multisectoral approach, aims to take into account the formal and informal economies in the effort to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. (6,7,35) From March to July in 2021, was promoted by the government in national campaign to raise awareness for PANLTE. (2,35)
Trilateral Agreement to Combat Child Trafficking	Trilateral agreement between the Governments of Togo, Benin, and Burkina Faso to address child trafficking. Lays out specific responsibilities for origin, transit, and destination countries and aims for enhanced border controls and regional coordination (8,16,43) Due to the impact of the pandemic, the government was not able to fully implement the agreement during the reporting period. (16)
National Development Plan (2019–2022)	Aims to improve economic growth, structurally transform the Togolese economy, and strengthen social protection and inclusion measures, including the implementation of a national biometric identification system. (8,44) In December 2021, the government issued an update to the National Development Plan due to the impact of the pandemic. (2)

While the Education Sector Plan (2020–2030) does not directly address eliminating child labor, it includes efforts to stimulate demand for education, including targeting localities where school access and retention are weak, especially for girls. It also proposes the gradual expansion of free lower secondary education for all students, and free upper secondary education for girls. (18,35)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Reference Center for Guidance and Care of Children in Difficult Situations	MASPPA-run shelter in Lomé that receives child trafficking and child labor survivors referred through Allô 1011. Provides shelter as well as legal, medical, psychological, and social services. (16) The shelter was active during the reporting year. (16)
Novissi Cash Transfer Scheme	Run by Ministry of Digital Economy and Digital Transformation in cooperation with U.S.-based non-profit Give Directly. Makes direct cash transfers of roughly \$20/month through mobile phones to Togo's poorest citizens in order to mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic. (45,46) Uses mobile phone data to identify the most vulnerable rural residents to receive cash transfers. (45,46) In February of 2021, expanded into the Savanes region, where over 244,000 additional people received transfers. Since 2020, has provided over 800,000 Togolese nationwide with direct cash transfers. (45,46)
McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program, 2020–2024	Provides free school lunch to an estimated 66,000 participants. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and implemented by Catholic Relief Services. (2,6) The program continued in 2021. (2)
Program of Cooperation UNICEF/Togo, 2019–2023	Aims to enhance child survival, education and development, child protection, and social inclusion in Togo. Includes efforts to reduce child vulnerability to exploitation, including by enhancing access to education, especially for girls. (47) During the reporting period, over 30,000 children in 158 schools received school supply kits, and 5,106 children who had been subjected to violence received legal, educational, and social services. (48)
World Bank-Funded Programs	Aim to address child labor by improving social safety nets for vulnerable families and by increasing access to education. The Safety Nets and Basic Services Project, a \$29 million project implemented by MASPPA and the Ministry of Grassroots Development (ANADEB), aims to provide social safety nets to poor communities. (2,49-52) During the reporting period, the program continued to be implemented, and it extended to 2023. (2) Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Youth Project (2017–2021), a \$15 million program implemented by ANADEB, provided access to income-generating opportunities for targeted poor and vulnerable youth in Togo. (2) The program was completed in 2021. (2) The Improving Quality and Equity of Basic Education Project (2020–2026) aims to improve teaching and learning quality, to improve equitable access to basic education in select regions, particularly among girls, and to strengthen sector management. (20)

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (16,38,53)

Social programs focus on alleviating poverty and promoting education rather than targeting specific sectors of child labor, such as domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, and agriculture. The government relies heavily on NGOs and international organizations for the implementation of social programs. (2) A shortage of funds may hinder program implementation. (8)

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 Togo (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that written law prohibits children from performing all types of hazardous labor.	2020 – 2021
	Establish by law free basic education, including lower secondary education.	2021
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors have the time and financial resources to carry out their primary duties of inspection and monitoring of labor laws.	2009 – 2021
	Conduct labor inspections in the informal sector as well as private homes and farms, in which children work in agriculture and domestic work.	2021
	Publish data on labor law enforcement efforts, including the numbers of labor inspections conducted, inspections conducted at worksites, child labor violations found, penalties imposed, penalties collected, or the targeting of routine inspections.	2021
	Publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of investigations conducted, criminal violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions obtained, and penalties imposed for the worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2021
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officials receive training, including training for new officials, refresher courses, and training on new laws.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that criminal investigators have sufficient financial and physical resources to adequately enforce criminal laws against child labor.	2017 – 2021
	Enforce legal penalties for criminal violations, such as child trafficking.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure that court system processes for addressing child trafficking are timely so as not to deter victims from reporting.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure effective coordination between the criminal justice system and social services to allow survivors to receive adequate support during judicial proceedings.	2021
Coordination	Ensure federated bodies are active and report on their activities.	2021
	Ensure that the National Committee for the Reception and Social Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking receives adequate funding.	2021
Government Policies	Fully implement any agreement signed to protect child trafficking.	2020 – 2021
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Sector Plan.	2013 – 2021
Social Programs	Increase access to education by eliminating school-related fees; ensuring that schools are free from sexual and physical violence; and increasing the number of schools; and improving school infrastructure and transportation, especially in rural areas.	2010 – 2021
	Ensure that social protection programs to address child labor receive adequate funding and are sufficient to address the scope of the problem in all relevant sectors.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that social programs specifically target child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and agriculture in addition to alleviating poverty and promoting education.	2019 – 2021

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