

In 2021, Uganda made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government increased its efforts to investigate, prosecute, and sentence government officials complicit in facilitating the worst forms of child labor. Uganda also reconstituted its National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labor. In addition, the government approved a new national action plan to address child labor. However, children in Uganda 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 gold mining. The lack of a centralized supervisory authority along with inadequate funding, training, and resources, hampered the capacity of law enforcement agencies to conduct child labor inspections and investigations. In addition, the law only guarantees free education through the primary level, which does not meet the international standard that free basic education through lower secondary school be guaranteed by law.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Uganda are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1,2) Children also perform dangerous tasks in gold mining. (3,4) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Uganda.

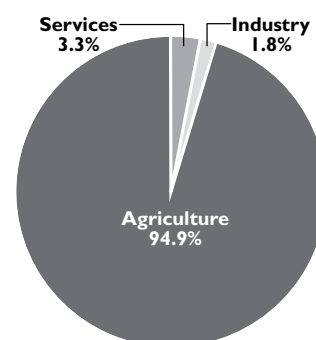
Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	22.2 (2,525,644)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	85.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	25.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		52.7

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 Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2016–2017. (6)

Figure I. 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.

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Cultivating and harvesting cocoa, coffee, corn, tea,† tobacco,† rice,† sugarcane,† and vanilla, and acting as scarecrows in rice fields (7-12)
	Working with livestock, including herding cattle† (12,13)
	Fishing,† including catching,† smoking,† and selling fish, and paddling† and loading boats† (1,9,12,13)
	Collecting grasshoppers (1,12,14)
Industry	Construction,† including making† and laying† bricks (1,9,13)
	Quarrying stone† and mining gold, charcoal, sand,† tin, and salt (1,3,9,12)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Manufacturing, including making steel† and working in carpentry workshops‡ (1,2,12)
Services	Domestic work† (1,13,14)
	Street work, including vending,† begging,† car washing,† working as porters,† scavenging,† and collecting and selling scrap metal (1,9,13,14)
	Working in hair salons, hotels,† restaurants,† bars,† and video halls† (1,9,13)
	Producing alcoholic beverages (1,13,15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,12)
	Forced labor in agriculture, fishing, cattle herding, working in bars and restaurants, begging, brickmaking, mining, stone quarrying, street vending, and domestic work (2,12)
	Use in the production of pornography and pornographic performances (16)
	Use in illicit activities, including smuggling, burglary, cattle theft, and car and house break-ins, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,9,12,13)

† 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.

Traffickers exploit Ugandan boys and girls in forced labor and sex trafficking in Uganda and abroad, with children increasingly at risk due to COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures. (2,12,17,18) They routinely use false job opportunities to lure children from rural areas to urban areas and subsequently exploit the children in forced labor or sex trafficking. Traffickers also exploit Ugandan children in forced labor and sex trafficking in neighboring countries, such as Kenya and Somalia, and in the Middle East and South Asia. (16-20) Children from rural areas, especially the Karamoja region, are vulnerable to human trafficking, and at times willingly migrate to Kampala and other urban centers, where they are forced into begging, street vending, domestic work, or commercial sexual exploitation. (12,16,21) NGO and media reports have indicated that children from Karamoja are sold in open-air markets or through intermediaries and forced into domestic work, begging, cattle herding, and commercial sexual exploitation. (1,2,22) Well-organized networks of traffickers force children into street begging and girls into commercial sexual exploitation. Traffickers often physically abuse children for failing to collect a designated amount of money. (2,21) Traffickers also exploit children from neighboring countries, including Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania, in forced agricultural labor, domestic servitude, and commercial sexual exploitation in Uganda. (2,18,21)

Child labor rates in general in Uganda have also seen an increase over the course of the pandemic. (12) During the reporting period, the Uganda Bureau of Labor Statistics released its 2019–2020 National Household Survey, which includes a component on child labor. The survey found that, as a result of school closures, child labor rates for children between the ages of 5 and 17 increased from 14 percent prior to the pandemic to 22 percent since the start of the pandemic, to a total of 2,702,000 children. (23) Child labor rates in rural areas nearly doubled as a result of the pandemic, and the prevalence of children working in markets, on farms, in mines, and as domestic workers, as well as children used for commercial sexual exploitation, increased. (9-12)

The Bureau also released a baseline study in cooperation with the End Child Labor in Tobacco Growing Foundation measuring child labor rates in the western districts of Hoima and Kikuube, which found that 3 out of 10 children between the ages of 4 and 17 were involved in some form of hazardous labor, and that over 30 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 17 were combining school with work (averaging 22 hours of work per week). (12,24) Children were found to be working in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sectors, including 18 percent of working children involved in commercial crop farming of tea, tobacco, sugarcane, and rice, among others. (12,24)

In yet another study, the Bureau partnered with UN Women to measure violence against children ages 10 to 14 and found that 39 percent were involved in hazardous work. The study noted that in northern Uganda, this rate was as high as 74 percent. (12)

In other parts of the country, girls worked in gold mines in Karamoja in northern Uganda, and boys grazed cattle in Rwenzori in western Uganda. Meanwhile, children in the Bidibidi refugee settlement in northwestern Uganda were engaged in hazardous labor, including working on farms and as domestic workers, which may include working long hours and physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. (9,25)




While Ugandan law provides for free primary education, the cost of school supplies, uniforms, and other materials often prohibits children from attending school. (1,4,26) Research also found that children experience physical and sexual abuse at school by teachers and classmates. (27) Furthermore, a lack of teachers and school infrastructure and poor transportation in remote rural areas have created barriers to children's access to education. (1,13,28) Although the Government of Uganda implemented alternative instruction strategies due to the COVID-19 shutdown—such as printed materials and radio and televised instruction—poor, rural, and vulnerable children were less likely to be able to access the alternative resources. (9,11,12)

Laws on free primary education apply equally to refugee children, but refugee children are often not enrolled in or not attending school. Girls, especially those in refugee camps, are at particular risk of being out of school and vulnerable to exploitation due to pressure to undertake domestic duties, gender-based violence, and harassment. (20,29,30) In addition to the same obstacles faced by Ugandan children, refugee children may face discrimination from fellow pupils and teachers due to their refugee status, and they may also experience language barriers. (31) For a number of refugee settlements, such as Nakivale, schools are often located far from where refugees live and are inadequately equipped to meet the needs of the large student population. (32)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act (33)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	18	Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act; Section 32 of the Employment Act; Regulations 5 and 8 of the Employment (Employment of Children) Regulations (33-35)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Regulation 6 and the First Schedule of the Employment (Employment of Children) Regulations; Section 7 of the Children (Amendment) Act (33,35)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2 and 5 of the Employment Act; Sections 3–5 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (34,36)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 8 of the Children (Amendment) Act; Sections 2–6 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (33,36)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 8A of the Children (Amendment) Act; Sections 2–5 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 131 of the Penal Code; Section 14 of the Anti-Pornography Act (33,36-38)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 5(d) of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 88 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act (36,39)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 52(2)(c) of the Defense Forces Act (40)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 5(b) of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (36)
Compulsory Education Age	No	13‡	Sections 2 and 10(3)(a) of the Education Act (26)
Free Public Education	No		Section 10(3)(a) of the Education Act (26)

* Country has no conscription (40)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (26)

After delays due to the pandemic, the government resumed its efforts to harmonize its legal provisions, and during the reporting period the Cabinet passed the Principles for the Amendment of the Employment Act. (12) The First Parliamentary Council is now drafting the bill, which includes measures to expand protections to informal, domestic, and migrant workers. The bill would also prohibit the hiring of children under the age of 16 as domestic workers. (12,41,42)

Uganda’s existing legal framework governing child labor does not meet international standards on a number of points. While Uganda has a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children under the age of 18, Section 8 of the Employment of Children Regulations permits a commissioner to allow children age 12 and older enrolled in an educational training or apprenticeship program to engage in hazardous work, in violation of international standards. (35) Children in Uganda are required to attend school only up to age 13. (26) This standard makes children ages 13 to 15 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. Finally, although Uganda has adopted policies to extend universal education through secondary level, by law free education is limited to the primary level. (26,44)

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
Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD)	Sets labor inspection priorities and inspection guidelines. (45) Includes the Industrial Court, which judges labor dispute cases that are referred by labor officers. Operates the Uganda Child Helpline known as Sauti. (46)
Ministry of Internal Affairs	Enforces criminal laws on the worst forms of child labor. The Uganda Police Force’s Child and Family Protection Unit investigates forced labor cases; the Special Investigations Division and the Anti-Human Trafficking Desk investigate cases related to human trafficking and the use of children in illicit activities; and the Sexual Offenses Desk investigates commercial sexual exploitation. (18)

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Local Government	Oversees district labor officers who refer cases to the Industrial Court. Deploys community development officers at the district level when district labor officers are not available. (18)
Directorate of Public Prosecutions	Prosecutes criminal cases related to the worst forms of child labor that are referred by the Uganda Police Force. (47)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Uganda took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the ability to assess penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$320,000 (9)	\$320,000 (12)
Number of Labor Inspectors	168 (9)	173 (12)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (48)	No (48)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (9)	Yes (12)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (9)	Yes (12)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	421 (9)	542 (12)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (9)	542 (12)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (48)	Yes (48)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (12)

While the labor inspectorate continued to carry out inspections during the reporting period, restrictions on movement and staff shortages due to the pandemic presented increased difficulties. (12) In addition to pandemic-related challenges, a local NGO has indicated that the inspectorate also faces funding issues and corruption at the local level, which often prevents labor inspectors from carrying out their duties. (12) During the reporting period, the government's Uganda Child Helpline helped identify 175 cases of child labor, primarily in domestic work. However, the government did not provide comprehensive data on the number of child labor violations identified through inspections, or the number of penalties applied and assessed for child labor violations. (12)

The MGLSD provided training to 40 labor inspectors in 2021, though it is not clear if this training included components on child labor. (12) Nonetheless, research has shown that training in general is not sufficient because labor inspectors lack the expertise to follow through on child labor cases. (1,12) Furthermore, labor unions have noted that the number of inspections is insufficient and that inspections are only carried out when complaints are received. Labor inspectors in Uganda have the authority to inspect private farms and residences, but the MGLSD has noted that inspectors rarely exercise this authority despite the prevalence of child domestic work in the country. (1)

The number of labor inspectors is still likely insufficient for the size of Uganda's workforce, which includes more than 17.3 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed countries, Uganda would need to employ about 434 inspectors. (49)

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Uganda now has 173 labor officers to cover its 135 districts, but due to budgetary limitations and a lack of labor inspection prioritization at the district level, these officers did not have sufficient funds to regularly carry out child labor inspections. (1,9,25,28) Research also found that follow-up inspections rarely happen due to insufficient funding at the district level. (45) Given the lack of resources for inspections, local civil society organizations often train labor inspectors and even assist them in conducting inspections. (13,15)

Uganda is signatory to ILO Convention 81 that requires labor inspection to be placed under the supervision and control of a central authority. (50,51) Research found, however, that coordination among the various agencies responsible for child labor law enforcement remains a challenge because labor officers are under district government authority, rather than under authority of the MGLSD. (52,53) For example, although under the Employment Act labor officers are required to submit monthly reports, in practice, the MGLSD does not receive labor reports from districts. (45)

Research found that child labor cases rarely reach the Industrial Court because of poor monitoring and the court's limited access to communities outside urban centers, where child labor is most likely to occur. (51) Overall, the government's enforcement and penalization of labor laws was inadequate, particularly in the informal sector in which most children work. (54)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Uganda took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including official complicity in the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (12)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (16)	Yes (12)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (12)

Due to the pandemic, officials indicated that the nationwide shutdown complicated criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor. (12) Nonetheless, criminal law enforcement agencies indicated they were able to secure an increase in convictions related to the worst forms of child labor as a result of training provided to prosecutors and officers from the Human Trafficking Institute. In addition to securing sentences ranging from 3.5 to 15 years in prison and financial restitution, prosecutors also obtained the first ever life sentence for child trafficking in Uganda for a boarding school headmaster charged on multiple counts of exploiting boys in his school. (12) Furthermore, Ugandan police working in collaboration with Kenyan authorities, identified a 10-year-old Ugandan girl trafficked to Kenya for forced domestic labor. Ugandan authorities eventually arrested three individuals responsible for managing a human trafficking network that trafficked girls out of Uganda to Kenya. (17) The government reported identifying 371 victims of the worst forms of child labor, though it is not clear if this number represents the totality of all cases during the reporting period. (17) Similarly, the government did not provide disaggregated data for the number of investigations, prosecutions, or convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.

Law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations have acknowledged that immigration officials are complicit and involved in human trafficking, including the trafficking of children. (2,16,17) Research has also found that some police are allegedly complicit in the commercial sexual exploitation of child refugees. Other high-level government officials own or are associated with labor recruitment companies and networks of traffickers that engage in child trafficking. (2,16,19,55) The involvement of government officials in human trafficking networks has significantly impeded operations against the worst forms of child labor. (2) Uganda's State House Anti-Corruption Unit, which works on human trafficking issues on an ad hoc basis, has initiated some investigations related to official complicity in human trafficking, but has not made any of these reports public. (19,21)

However, in 2021, the government took steps to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence officials complicit in human trafficking, including for cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children. One case investigated in 2020 involving an officer from the Uganda People's Defense Forces resulted in a plea bargain in 2021 and a 6-year sentence on charges of aggravated trafficking in children and defilement, as well as commercial sexual exploitation. (12,17) In addition, authorities arrested four police officers from the Uganda Police Force and charged them with various trafficking crimes, including one officer charged with aggravated trafficking in children and commercial sexual exploitation. Authorities also arrested two immigration officers in 2021 on charges of promoting and attempted human trafficking. (17) All 6 cases initiated in 2021 are currently pending, with the suspects on bond. Courts typically take up to 2 or 3 years to complete a prosecution. (17,25) Also during the reporting period, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions indicated that it had initiated investigations into officials at the Entebbe International Airport suspected of facilitating human trafficking in 2021. (17)

According to the government, police officers identify and refer street children to probation officers and civil society organizations to place children in homes and shelters and do not keep them in detention facilities; however, some children may have been housed in juvenile rehabilitation centers because shelters are frequently full. Police intermittently rounded up street children, housed them in children's homes and shelters for several days while social workers completed background checks and family tracing, and then returned them to their families. (17,56,57) Research found that street children, including potential human trafficking victims and child laborers, have faced conflict with local authorities; however, law enforcement noted in 2020 that police are less likely to detain or beat them, in part as a result of an increased awareness about child protection issues. (25,43,58-60) Nonetheless, reports have indicated that investigators rarely follow up on reports of children involved in domestic work. When child domestic workers complain to their employers about not being paid, the employers may report the children to the police for theft, and police subsequently treat them as criminals rather than as victims who have not been paid for their work. (1)

During the reporting period, the Coordinating Office for Preventing Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP) significantly increased anti-trafficking in persons training opportunities, training over 636 criminal law enforcement officials. COPTIP also trained 60 workers at the Uganda Child Helpline to improve identification of human trafficking cases. (17) Meanwhile, the Uganda Police Force provided training on Uganda anti-trafficking policies to over 500 investigators. (17) However, training of criminal investigators is insufficient, in part due to regular staff turnover and transfers. Some criminal law enforcement officials are not aware of key human trafficking laws, and some officers misclassify cases, conduct insufficient investigations, or encourage victims to accept payment from their traffickers to settle cases. (15,19,21)

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 inactive mechanisms.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labor*	Coordinates child labor issues and implements the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor, including by setting policy priorities, securing resources for child labor programs, and coordinating with key stakeholders. Led by MGLSD, includes members from several ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Local Government, and Uganda Police. (1,13,61) The committee was reconstituted in 2020 and formally inaugurated in October 2021. (9,61) Met twice during the reporting period, in September and December. (12)
Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Children	Multi-partisan body of Members of Parliament focused on issues affecting Ugandan children, particularly those in vulnerable situations, including street children. (1,62) During the reporting period, the Forum reestablished its working relationship with local NGO Joy for Children and stressed the need for increased child advocacy in the face of pandemic-related challenges affecting children, such as child labor and exploitation. (18,63)
Anti-Human Trafficking National Task Force	Coordinates government efforts on human trafficking. Led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the Coordinating Office for Preventing Trafficking in Persons serving as the secretariat. (2,17) The Task Force resumed its quarterly meetings after March 2021, following a hiatus due to pandemic restrictions. (12,17)
National Child Well-Being Steering Committee*	Instituted through the National Child Policy of 2020, began operating in 2021 as the body to which all other working and coordinating groups will report. This new committee held its first meeting in November of 2021. (12)
National Children Authority	Works to ensure that member organizations integrate child labor concerns into their policies and budgets. Members include 10 government agencies. (64) The Authority worked to disseminate the new national action plan against child labor but was still not fully constituted in the reporting period. (12)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created 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 inconsistent implementation of national policies throughout the country.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (2020/2021–2024/2025)†	Launched in 2021 and developed in alignment with the country's National Development Plan, aims to focus government efforts on prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reduction of the risk of child labor, with the goal of eliminating all forms of child labor by 2025. (65,66)
National Child Policy	Seeks to coordinate the protection of child rights, focusing on abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. Includes prioritization of the elimination of child labor and was launched with an implementation strategy through 2025. (67,68) Seeks to outline the responsibilities of all stakeholders in implementing child-related policies and focuses on four basic children's rights: survival, development, protection, and participation. (67,68) During the reporting period, the National Children Authority worked with 80 district-level local governments to disseminate the policy and its implementation plan. (69)
National Social Protection Policy	Aims to reduce poverty and socioeconomic inequalities for inclusive development by targeting vulnerable people, including child laborers. (70) As part of the plan, during the reporting period the government launched the Single Registry for Social Protection digital platform intended to consolidate information from all social protection and security programs in the country in order to improve program coordination. (71)
National Action Plan for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Uganda (2019–2024)	Focuses on developing sustainable systems and structures to prevent human trafficking; improving capacity for the identification, protection of, and support for victims; improving investigations and prosecutions; and establishing cooperative relationships with international stakeholders. Includes the National Referral Guidelines for Management of Victims of Trafficking, which seek to improve coordination among stakeholders responsible for providing services to victims and those responsible for prosecuting criminals. (72,73) The government continued to hold public awareness campaigns focusing on human trafficking in 2021 and, in cooperation with IOM, worked to disseminate the plan's National Referral Guidelines at a national and local level. (74)
National Multisectoral Coordination Framework for Adolescent Girls (2017/2018–2021/2022)	Coordinates government, civil society, and community efforts to provide services and programs that focus on issues affecting adolescent girls ages 10 to 19, including exploitation in domestic work and gender-based violence in schools. (13,75) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the framework during the reporting period.

† Policy approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (76)

During the reporting period, the Commissioner for Children and Youth in the MGLSD announced that Uganda would become the first country to develop and implement a National Child Protection Action Plan to address online child sexual exploitation. The funding and development of the plan is expected to occur throughout 2022. (77)

Despite the efforts to develop and implement a national action plan against child labor, because of the decentralized nature of inspections in Uganda, some districts have developed their own labor action plans that do not always reflect MGLSD priorities. (51)

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 inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Supply Chains 2018–2022 (ACCEL Africa)	Launched in 2018, and formally implemented by ILO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands in Uganda in 2020 in partnership with the Government of Uganda and the Federation of Ugandan Employers. The Uganda portion of the \$29 million, multi-country project targets child labor in coffee and tea supply chains in the Mbale, Kabarole, Buikwe, Hoima, and Bushenyi districts. (9) In 2021, ILO launched a livelihood support program for vulnerable families that includes vocational training for children ages 14 to 17. The program will target over 1,200 children at risk of child labor in the tea and coffee sectors and reintegrate them into school. (78)
Uganda Child Helpline (<i>Sauti</i>)†	Funded primarily by UNICEF with in-kind contributions from MGLSD, comprises District Action Centers and a physical call center located in Wakiso that screens all calls on reported cases of child abuse. Caseworkers at District Action Centers follow up directly on cases of child abuse, including child labor and exploitation, assigned to them by the National Call Center and liaise with local authorities to address the reported incidents. (46) During the reporting period, the hotline identified 175 victims of child labor. (12)
Realizing Livelihood Improvement Through Savings and Education (2019–2021)†	NGO-implemented program in partnership with the government that focused on addressing child labor issues in tobacco-growing regions. (27,79) In its final year, the project indicated that it had either withdrawn, prevented, or protected over 31,000 children from child labor. The project also worked to draft pandemic-related implications for child labor into the new child labor action plan. (12)
Back Home Campaign for Karamoja Children†	Government program that rescues Karamoja street children working in Kampala and places them in rehabilitation centers in Wakiso and Moroto districts before reuniting them with their families. (13,80) Activities for the program were suspended during the reporting period due to the pandemic. (12)

† Program is funded by the Government of Uganda.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (81,82)

Although Uganda has implemented programs that address child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in mining and commercial sexual exploitation. For example, the government lacks its own facilities to house child victims of labor exploitation or human trafficking and must instead rely on local community services organizations. (1,9) Furthermore, the MGLSD has noted that programs are concentrated in specific districts and thus do not cover child labor issues throughout the country. (1)

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 Uganda (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that only minors age 16 and older who have received adequate, specific instruction or vocational training are permitted to perform hazardous work, and that their health, safety, and morals are fully protected.	2017 – 2021
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that the age up to which education is compulsory is the same as the minimum age for work.	2021
Enforcement	Collect and publish disaggregated national-level information on the labor law enforcement efforts, including trainings offered to labor inspectors, number of investigations conducted, number of child labor violations found, number of child labor penalties imposed, and number of penalties collected.	2013 – 2021
	Ensure that the inspectorate is using its existing authorities to inspect private farms and homes and to conduct sufficient routine and unannounced inspections, including in the informal sector.	2017 – 2021
	Enhance the effectiveness of the inspectorate to enforce labor laws, including by establishing a mechanism to assess child labor violation penalties.	2017 – 2021
	Provide sufficient training to labor inspectors, initial training to new criminal investigators, and refresher training to existing investigators, to ensure that officials understand and are able to identify, categorize, and investigate child labor cases.	2019 – 2021
	Provide the labor inspectorate with sufficient funding and resources at the district level to ensure that inspectors are present in all districts and are able to carry out their duties.	2013 – 2021
	Improve coordination between national and district-level child labor enforcement bodies to ensure that relevant data are shared, and child labor inspections are prioritized across the country.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that child labor cases reach the Industrial Court and that penalties are assessed by addressing monitoring issues and improving the court's reach outside urban centers.	2019 – 2021
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2009 – 2021
	Publish disaggregated data on number of investigations, violations, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and penalties imposed for the worst forms of child labor.	2017 – 2021
	Continue and increase efforts to ensure that public officials who facilitate or participate in human trafficking or the worst forms of child labor are held accountable, including officials who have ties with labor recruitment companies.	2019 – 2021
	Strengthen mechanisms for following up on child labor claims and referring street children, including potential human trafficking victims, to social services providers, and prevent these children from being detained and abused by police.	2015 – 2021
	Increase the capacity of criminal law enforcement agencies to respond to the worst forms of child labor by dedicating more personnel to worst forms of child labor cases and improving training for criminal law enforcement staff.	2020 – 2021
	Coordination	Ensure that coordinating mechanisms are fully functional and able to carry out their mandates.
Government Policies	Ensure that district labor action plans reflect the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development's priorities.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Multisectoral Coordination Framework for Adolescent Girls and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2018 – 2021
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children by defraying informal costs borne by families, including supplies, uniforms, and materials; addressing physical and sexual violence; and ensuring sufficient teachers, infrastructure, and transportation in rural areas.	2012 – 2021
	Enhance efforts to ensure that refugee children have equal access to educational opportunities by addressing gender-based violence and exploitation, harassment, and refugee discrimination; accommodating the language needs of refugee students; and ensuring that there are well-equipped schools accessible to refugee settlements.	2012 – 2021
	Ensure the availability of shelters for victims of child labor, including child trafficking victims.	2017 – 2021
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, particularly in mining and commercial sexual exploitation, in all areas of the country.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021

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