

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Azerbaijan made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Internal Affairs trained more than 700 police officers from 25 city and district police units on forced labor and human trafficking issues. In addition, the government continued efforts to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream education by establishing 12 more schools with inclusive classrooms, in addition to the existing 8 schools. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Azerbaijan is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it has not rescinded a law that delays advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. This law continues a moratorium on all worksite labor inspections. While inspectors can conduct desk reviews in response to complaints, this lack of proactive or onsite inspection mechanisms may leave potential violations of child labor laws undetected in workplaces. Children in Azerbaijan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging. In addition, data are limited regarding how many children are currently engaged in child labor. In some instances, police treat children forced to beg or engage in street work as a family issue, leading to child labor cases not being properly referred for criminal investigation and prosecution.



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

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Azerbaijan.

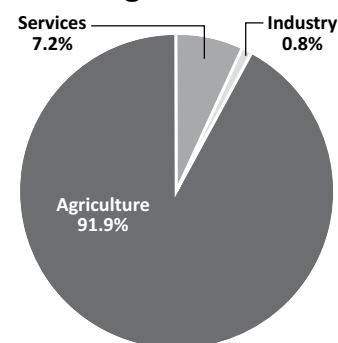
**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	4.5 (70,034)
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	94.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from the Child Labor Survey (SIMPOC), 2005. (2)

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



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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including harvesting potatoes and production of cotton, tea, and tobacco† (3-7)
Services	Street work, including begging, vending, carrying luggage, and gathering scrap metal (7-10) Washing and repairing cars (11,12) Catering, activities unknown (8,12,13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,8,9,14,15) Forced begging (9,15-17)

† 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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Child labor in Azerbaijan occurs in the agriculture sector; however, data are limited regarding how many children are currently engaged in child labor in this or other sectors. (2,3,5,6,18) Although the prevalence of child labor in cotton harvesting appears to be small, there were reports in 2019 and 2020 that children under age 15 worked picking cotton and other crops to augment family incomes; however, no new reports were identified in 2021 or 2022. (3,15,19,20) Reports also indicate that children under age 17 engage in household work, on small family farms, or in family businesses. (17,21) Crop production in Azerbaijan is governed by a "priority" system that conditions agricultural subsidies, services, and access to public resources, such as irrigation water, on whether farmers produce one or more crops that the government has designated as high priority. (3) In some cases, regional and local government officials are held responsible for mobilizing sufficient labor to meet established production targets for one or more of these priority crops. (22,23) This system creates a risk that farmers and local officials may turn to exploitative labor practices, including child labor and forced labor, to ensure they are able to meet production targets for designated crops. (19,23) Street children, some of whom become homeless after they are released from government-run care institutions, and children from marginalized communities are also particularly vulnerable to human trafficking within Azerbaijan. (7,24,25)

Although Article 5 of the Education Law guarantees free universal education, undocumented children and children with disabilities face difficulty accessing education. (15) The court proceedings required to secure identification documents can take up to 2 or more years, during which time children without identification documents are ineligible to enroll and attend school or to access health services. (3,15,26) Some children with disabilities are not in school or are facing barriers to education caused by inaccessible infrastructure, lack of specialized training for teachers on inclusive education, and discrimination against individuals with disabilities. (17,27,28) Children from the Roma ethnic community also face barriers to education due to social stigma. (7,26) In addition, children in some rural areas have low rates of school attendance. (15,17,27) Children not attending school are vulnerable to child labor.

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Azerbaijan 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 Azerbaijan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of criminal prohibitions for purchasing sex with a child.

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 42 and 249 of the Labor Code; Article 192 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (29,30)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 250 of the Labor Code; Article 192 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (29,30)

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**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 98, 250–252, and 254 of the Labor Code; Decree 58 of the Cabinet of Ministers in 2000; Article 9 of the Law on the Rights of the Child (29,31,32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 35 of the Constitution; Article 144-2 of the Criminal Code (33,34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		The Law on Trafficking in Persons; Article 144-1 of the Criminal Code (34,35)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 144-1 and 171 of the Criminal Code (34)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 28 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 170 of the Criminal Code (32,34)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	19	Article 36 of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service (36)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 2, 3, and 12 of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service (36)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 116 of the Criminal Code (34)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 19 of the Law on Education; Article 13 of the Law on General Education (37,38)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 5 and 19 of the Law on Education; Article 13 of the Law on General Education; Article 22 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 42 of the Constitution (32,33,37,38)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (37,38)

The laws criminalizing commercial sexual exploitation of children are insufficient because they do not criminalize the purchase of commercial sex involving children. Similarly, the criminalization of involvement of a child in "immoral actions" does not clearly criminalize the use or offering of a child for the production of pornography or pornographic performances. (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, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in Azerbaijan may impede the enforcement of child labor laws.

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

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population (MLSPP)	Enforces labor laws related to the worst forms of child labor through the State Labor Inspection Service (SLIS). (17) All SLIS inspectors are trained to detect and respond to child labor and received training on child labor issues in 2022. (17) Due to the ongoing moratorium on all worksite labor inspections, passed in 2016, SLIS is only able to receive and respond to complaints through desk reviews. (27,39,40) Based on information received, inspectors are empowered to identify violations and impose appropriate penalties. Although SLIS can impose penalties directly against individuals, it must refer cases to the courts to levy penalties against corporate entities. (17,39) In addition, SLIS is able to identify potential minimum age violations by monitoring an electronic database of labor contracts, and has the authority to impose penalties for violations. (39,41) During the reporting period, SLIS drafted and submitted for the government's approval a risk-based routine inspection plan. Approval of this plan will permit SLIS to resume limited routine labor inspections for occupational safety and health issues, including hazardous child labor, based on pre-identified risk groups of enterprises. (17,21)

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

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA)	Central executive agency responsible for public security and the prevention of criminal offenses, including child trafficking and begging. (16,17) Through the Anti-Trafficking Division (ATD), enforces human trafficking laws, investigates human trafficking violations, to include child trafficking, and enforces criminal laws related to the use of children in illicit activities. (9,17) Refers children who are survivors of human trafficking to social services for assistance with school enrollment, participation in recreational activities, and procurement of proper documentation. (8,17) Operates a 24-hour hotline for the public to report suspected child trafficking and instances of child begging. (15) ATD serves as the National Coordinator of the Interagency Commission to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, coordinates policies to counter trafficking in persons, and oversees implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. (3,42) Continued to preside over the work of the 33 entities, including government agencies and local executive authorities, involved in implementing the 2020–2024 National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. (17) During the reporting period, MoIA trained more than 700 police officers from 25 city and district police bodies on trafficking prevention and prevention of forced labor. (17,43)

### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, the absence of worksite inspections conducted at the national level in Azerbaijan may have impeded the enforcement of child labor laws (Table 6).

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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown (17)
Number of Labor Inspectors	180 (15)	182 (17)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (29,30)	Yes (29,30)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown	Yes (17)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	0 (15)	0 (17)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (15)	0‡ (17)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	1 (15)	0‡ (17)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	1 (15)	0‡ (17)
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (15)	No (17)
Routine Inspections Targeted	N/A	N/A
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (44)	No (17)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	N/A	N/A
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (15)	Yes (17)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (17)

‡ Data are from January 2022 to November 2022.

The government suspended all routine and unannounced labor inspections in 2016 as part of a broader anti-corruption drive. In 2017, this moratorium was extended until 2021 as part of an effort to stimulate small- and medium-business growth. (8,11,21,39,40) In early 2022, the government extended this moratorium through January 1, 2023. (45,46) The moratorium was then extended through the end of 2023. (43) In addition, there have been no indicators as to when the government anticipates a resumption of onsite inspections. (17,44,47) Although the State Labor Inspection Service (SLIS) is still able to receive and respond to complaints related to child labor and impose penalties in cases of violations, this response cannot include onsite inspections, and inspectors are limited to conducting desk reviews. (17,27,39,40) From January to November 2022, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population (MLSP) reported there were no cases of underage labor, forced child labor, or administrative offenses committed by employers related to the involvement of children in activities that could endanger their life or health. (17)

Research indicates that Azerbaijan does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (48) Government officials also assess the number of inspectors as insufficient to fully enforce child labor laws in Azerbaijan. (49) In addition, sources report a lack of coordination between law enforcement agencies. (15)

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### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Azerbaijan 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 a lack of investigations pertaining to forced begging cases.

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (15)	Yes (17)
Number of Investigations	0 (15)	16 (17)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (15)	14 (17)
Number of Convictions	1 (15)	1 (17)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (15)	Yes (17)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (15)	Yes (17)

In 2022, the government significantly increased its criminal law enforcement efforts. (41) From January to November 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) identified six cases of child trafficking. (17,43) MoIA reported that one criminal case was initiated in November 2022 for involving a child in prostitution and in child pornography. Four additional criminal cases were initiated for child trafficking, resulting in three prosecutions. (17) In addition, MoIA investigated 15 cases involving a child in criminal activity, a significant increase over previous years; however, it is unclear if any of those cases involved children in drug production, drug trade, or other forced labor. Of those cases, 13 ended in an indictment and 2 investigations are ongoing. (17) In 2022, the government sentenced one individual to 7 years and 6 months in prison in a child forced labor case. (17)

In 2022, the government increased its provision of training to address human trafficking. Employees of 139 migration offices of the State Migration Service received training on human trafficking, victim identification indicators, and children's rights issues. (43) Multiple government agencies and NGOs also participated in several anti-human trafficking-related trainings organized by IOM, with financial support from the U.S. Department of State and USAID. In addition, the MoIA and the Ministry of Education held educational seminars at 36 secondary schools to raise awareness of human trafficking. (43) Furthermore, the government distributed 7,000 educational booklets and 7,000 flyers on human trafficking to state agencies and offices, and a human trafficking awareness-raising video, produced by the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs (SCFWCA), aired on social media and public television. (43)

In 2022, reports indicate that law enforcement and other government agencies used human trafficking indicators when detecting potential victims of human trafficking among vulnerable populations, including children. (43) In some cases, police treat children begging or engaging in street work as a family issue rather than screening for indicators of forced begging. As a result, these situations are often referred to the Commission on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights for coordination of services, rather than to law enforcement agencies for investigation and, when warranted, criminal prosecution of forced begging cases. (8,25,50-52) In addition, research found that police declined to investigate potential forced begging cases and that children identified in child labor resumed work almost immediately after being identified by law enforcement officials. (3,9,49) Also, child labor law enforcement efforts are concentrated in Baku, with few investigations undertaken outside the capital. (53)

## IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism 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 a lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Commission on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights	Coordinates policies at the national level to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. Located within the Cabinet of Ministers and acts as a national-level version of district-level Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights, which are located in individual district Executive Commissions. (3) Although Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights exist at both the national and local levels, research was unable to determine the relationship between these respective national and local coordinating bodies. (3)

In 2022, the government amended the Rules of the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking to modify the Interagency Commission's composition and include NGO members, and to delegate the Commission with implementation of the National Referral Mechanism. (43,54,55) The SCFWCA also continued to regulate, implement, and coordinate child-related policies, including research on child labor. Although the SCFWCA is empowered to work with local governments, particularly district-level Executive Committees, to coordinate policy and research related to children and gather data on the situation of children and families in rural areas, the body has limited capacity to carry out its work. (3,17) In 2022, the SCFWCA conducted trainings on the prevention of child labor for labor inspectors, police inspectors, regional authorities, and business owners. (17)

## 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 coverage for all worst forms of child labor.

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

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2020–2024)	Aims to address human trafficking through enhanced coordination between relevant government agencies and improved protection for human trafficking victims. Includes action items to improve services for child trafficking victims, address forced child begging, and research and monitor forced labor and child trafficking risks. (56) Amendment to the law On Combating Human Trafficking in 2022 approved the establishment of a working group under the authority of MoA's Trafficking in Persons National Coordinator to oversee the implementation of the National Action Plan. (17,35,57) In October 2022, the government also participated in an IOM- and USAID-led mid-term review meeting on the implementation of the National Action Plan. (43)
Strategy on Children of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2020–2030)	Aims to improve child protection mechanisms and legislation. Through the associated National Action Plan, includes action items on implementing international commitments under ILO Convention 182 and enhancing coordination to detect and prevent child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. (58,59) The National Early Childhood Development program was launched as part of the Strategy. Jointly organized by SCFWCA, the EU delegation to Azerbaijan, the Regional Development Public Union, and UNICEF Azerbaijan, the program aims, in part, to increase the capacity of children's services professionals and raise awareness around the health and education of children in four target regions—Ganja, Shirvan, Aghjabadi, and Absheron. (60)
State Program for the Development of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities (2018–2024)	Aims to create inclusive education for children with disabilities. In addition to the existing 8 schools nationwide, in 2022, the government established 12 more schools with inclusive classrooms, including training teachers in inclusive teaching methods. (51,62,63) The government continued to develop and publish textbooks for students with intellectual disabilities and methodical aids for teachers and parents during the reporting period. (51)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (15,21)

Although the government amended the labor code in 2020 to prohibit children under the age of 18 from engaging in work involving difficult or harmful working conditions, the law does not specifically mention agriculture and research found no policy on hazardous child labor, including in agriculture. (15)

The State Program on Improvement of Official Statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2018–2025) aims to improve and further develop the national statistics system, and includes an action item on developing a methodology for studying child labor and conducting survey research on the prevalence of child labor in Azerbaijan. (61) In 2022, the State Statistical Committee and UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Conducting a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in Azerbaijan, including a dataset on child labor. (64,65)

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### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, 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 insufficient funding.

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

Program	Description & Activities
Government-run Assistance Centers†	Social Shelter and Rehabilitation Center for Minors‡, MLSPP-run shelter in Baku for vulnerable children, including street children. (3,50) Children are able to stay in these shelters until they turn 18. (16) The shelters were active in 2022. (41) Additionally, Victims Assistance Centers† provide direct social services and social services referrals, education on administrative and legal procedures, and medical assistance to survivors of human trafficking, including children. Funded by MLSPP. (17,39) In 2022, each of the six child trafficking victims identified by MoLA were paid a one-time benefit from the government, and five of them were placed in Victims Assistance Centers and received additional services from these centers. (43)
Targeted Social Assistance Program†	MLSPP-run program that provides cash transfers to vulnerable families. (8) During the reporting period, the government approved an increase in benefit payments for families receiving state assistance, including families with children with disabilities and low-income families. (17,51,66)
MoLA Identification Document Program†	Provides identification documents to undocumented minors who may be street children or victims of human trafficking. (49) In 2022, three identified child trafficking victims were provided with identity cards. (43)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Azerbaijan.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (14,21,50,67)

In 2022, the Ministry of Education organized training on children's labor rights to 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students. (17) However, the level of government support for NGO-run shelters for trafficking victims is inconsistent. (14) Directors of these shelters note that the unpredictable nature of funding prevents long-term planning and capacity building of shelters, including those that serve child victims. In addition, the number of social workers with training in supporting vulnerable and at-risk children remains low. (14,42,68)

### 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 Azerbaijan (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Criminally prohibit the use of children for prostitution and the use and offering of children for the production of pornography and pornographic performances.	2019 – 2022
Enforcement	Resume routine, targeted, and unannounced labor inspections, including in response to complaints, to ensure that child labor laws are enforced.	2016 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 182 to 265 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 5.3 million people.	2016 – 2022
	Publish information on the labor inspectorate's operations, including funding levels.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that children identified by law enforcement as engaged in child labor are referred to social services centers or other services, as appropriate, so that they do not return to child labor.	2018 – 2022
	Increase law enforcement investigations related to child labor outside Baku.	2018 – 2022
	Screen for forced labor indicators in child begging situations, including those referred by NGOs, and, as appropriate, investigate and prosecute forcing children to beg as a criminal offense.	2018 – 2022
	Coordination	Increase the coordination and referral of potential child labor crimes between the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population and the Ministry of Interior Affairs.
Ensure that all regulative and coordinating bodies, including the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs and the national and local Commissions on Juvenile Issues and Protection of Minors' Rights, have the capacity to carry out their intended mandates, including across different agencies and levels of government.		2016 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as hazardous work in agriculture.	2016 – 2022
	Revise policies on priority crops that mandate production targets to help prevent child labor in agriculture.	2019 – 2022

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that children from marginalized groups and children with disabilities have equal access to education.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that undocumented children are able to access education.	2019 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken to implement social programs to address child labor during the reporting period.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the government provides sufficient and consistent funding to NGO-run shelters for victims of human trafficking to enable shelters to provide adequate services to victims.	2015 – 2022

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