

In 2022, Botswana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government ratified the International Labor Organization's Labor Inspection Convention and the Labor Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, which outline mandates to promote effective labor inspection systems, including in the agricultural sector in which child labor is prevalent in the country. The Ministry of Labor also provided comprehensive information on its labor law enforcement efforts and partnered with a local non-governmental organization to conduct targeted inspections in key districts where there have been reports of child labor on commercial farms and cattle posts. However, children in Botswana are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and forced labor in cattle herding and domestic work. Key gaps remain in the country's legal framework, including the lack of a minimum age for compulsory education and a list of hazardous work activities for children. The government also did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. In addition, the design and implementation of social programs to address child labor are insufficient to fully address the scope of the problem, especially in commercial sexual exploitation, cattle herding, and domestic work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Botswana. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (2)

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	Herding and spraying of cattle and goats (3-5)
	Farming, including rearing livestock, mending fences, and molding bricks (5)
Services	Street work, including vending (6)
	Domestic work (7,8)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,9-11)
	Forced labor in cattle herding (11)
	Forced labor in domestic service (11)

‡ 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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Children in Botswana are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (9,12) Research indicates that some children residing in the Dukwi Refugee Camp are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation around the camp, as they await decisions regarding their refugee status. (6,11) Some parents in poor rural communities send their children to engage in domestic work in cities, or at farms or cattle posts, increasing their vulnerability to forced labor. (11) Children, particularly from the San minority ethnic group, work on commercial farms in the Ghanzi Region, tending to and herding cattle. (7,9) An NGO reported that one of the work activities children perform on commercial farms is the "dipping" (spraying) of cattle, a process to remove ticks and flies. Such work may expose children to hazardous chemicals. (7) On some farms, employers may withhold food rations unless children perform work. (3,7,12) Children working in domestic service settings are exposed to various conditions that are indicative of forced labor, including confinement; denial of promised educational opportunities and basic necessities; and physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. (11)

Botswana law provides for free basic education, and the costs of books, uniforms, and other materials may be waived for children from poorer families. However, insufficient transportation to schools in remote regions of Botswana and a lack of materials in indigenous languages create educational barriers for children from minority ethnic groups. (5,9,13,14) In addition, school enrollment requires an identity document, such as a birth certificate or national identity card. (12) The government allows all children to enroll in primary education, even without these documents; however, migrant children and children born outside of health care facilities, or whose parents did not register them at birth, may not be able to enroll in secondary schools or register for national exams. (5,9,15) Schools also often lack adequate resources for students with disabilities. Children of the San ethnic group have limited access to educational facilities, must travel long distances to reach schools, and encounter language barriers and prejudice within schools, which cause children to drop out. (9,14,16,17) Moreover, pervasive physical and sexual abuse, including gender-based violence within schools, by both teachers and peers, contributes to children leaving education early and becoming vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (3,6,18,19)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Botswana 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	✓

During the reporting period, the government acceded to the ILO Labor Inspection Convention (C. 81) and the Labor Inspection (Agriculture) Convention (C. 189), which outline principles for development of strong labor inspection systems, including in the agricultural sector in which child labor occurs in Botswana. (5,20)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Botswana's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of a compulsory education age that is consistent with the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 2 and 107 of the Employment Act (21)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 110 of the Employment Act (21)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 71 of the Employment Act; Section 114 of the Children's Act; Articles 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Section 262 of the Penal Code (21-24)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 114 of the Children's Act; Article 175 of the Penal Code; Articles 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (22-24)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 25 and 57–59 of the Children's Act; Sections 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (22,23)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 60 of the Children's Act (23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 17 of the Botswana Defense Force Act (25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 26 of the Children's Act (23)
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 18 of the Children's Act (23)

* Country has no conscription (25)

The Employment Act allows children to conduct light work activities at age 14, with restrictions on the number of hours a child can work during a single day and in a week, and includes a requirement that the Labor Commissioner approve any forms of work outside of domestic service; however, the government has yet to determine the conditions or types of light work activities permitted for children. (13) Additionally, while the Employment Act prohibits night work and underground work for children, the government has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (10,14,21) In addition, legal protections for children from commercial sexual exploitation do not meet international standards because the use of children for prostitution is not criminally prohibited. (23) Despite the provision of free basic education, there is not a compulsory education age, which may increase children's vulnerability to child labor. (14)

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.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs	Enforces child labor laws and conducts inspections under the Employment Act. (21,26) Facilitates coordination with local leaders and law enforcement officers. Posts labor inspectors to District Council offices to carry out their duties. (26) Coordinates with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), and MLGRD's District and Municipal Council Child Welfare Divisions, to respond to cases of child labor and place children in safe environments. (6,26,27) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor partnered with a local NGO to conduct targeted inspections in the Ghanzi and Kgalagadi Districts, where child labor has been reported on commercial farms and cattle posts. Research, however, indicates a need for increased inspections in these districts given their geographical size. (5)
Botswana Police Service (BPS)	Responds to cases of labor law violation, including child labor violations, based on referrals from the Ministry of Labor. (28) Investigates cases of the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking. (26) During the reporting period, BPS established four child-friendly police stations, increasing the total number of such stations to five. (29) BPS also conducted educational campaigns in schools to teach teachers and students about trafficking in persons. (30)
Ministry of Justice	Monitors suspected human trafficking cases and leads the Human Trafficking (Prohibition) Committee. (11)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Botswana took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (9)	Unknown (5,31)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (9)	50 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (21)	No (21)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (9)	No (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (9)	1,007 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (9)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (9)	N/A (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (9)	N/A (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (9)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (21)	Yes (21)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (21)	Yes (21)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (5)

Under the Employment Act, child labor violations are criminal offenses, resulting in 12 months imprisonment; as such, Botswana labor inspectors refer violations to police for investigation and imposition of penalties. (21)

Research indicates that Botswana does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (32,33) Some of Botswana's largest administrative districts have only one or two labor inspectors, which likely hinders monitoring of farms and cattle posts where there is evidence of child labor. (3,28) Furthermore, labor inspectors are not authorized to inspect domestic households, and some labor inspectors have faced obstacles in accessing large farms, such as locked gates or denial of entry, inhibiting their ability to identify underage workers. (3,6) Although two labor officers participated in a workshop organized by a local NGO on child labor concepts, the rest of the labor inspectorate did not receive comprehensive training during the reporting period. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

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

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (9)	Unknown (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (9)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	1 (34)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	1 (34)	Unknown (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (34)	Unknown (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (5)

The lack of child-friendly courts and social workers in Botswana leads to delays in processing cases, few referrals, and limited psychosocial support to child victims of exploitation. (29) The government did not provide criminal law enforcement data during the reporting period.

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 information on steps the coordination mechanism has taken to address child labor during the reporting year.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Advisory Committee on Child Labor	Oversees government policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. Reports to the government three to four times a year. (9) Includes representatives from government agencies, various NGOs, worker federations, and employer organizations. (9) Led by the Ministry of Labor, with participation from MLGRD, Ministry of Finance, and the Office of the President. (15) At the local level, child labor coordination is handled through Child Labor Committees that include social workers; schoolteachers; members of the Village Development Committees, which are local government structures; labor inspectors; and community leaders, including chiefs and priests. (9) Research could not determine whether the Advisory Committee on Child Labor was active during the reporting period. (5,9,35)

The Ministry of Defense, Justice, and Security leads a counter-trafficking in persons coordinating body, which includes representatives from the labor inspectorate and social services. (9)

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 the lack of a policy to address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan (2018–2022)	Supervised and coordinated by the Ministry of Defense, Justice, and Security. Encouraged interagency collaboration in eliminating and preventing trafficking in persons in Botswana, particularly trafficking of women and children, through the establishment and maintenance of a Human Trafficking (Prohibition) Committee. (31,36) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period.

Research indicates that the government is not actively supporting implementation of key national policies for the prevention and elimination of child labor. (5,9) Child labor elimination and prevention strategies are not included in relevant national policies, including the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan and the Botswana National Youth Policy. (37,38) Although Botswana had a policy to address trafficking in persons, research found no evidence of a policy related to other worst forms of child labor.

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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 inadequate programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Government-Funded Programs to Prevent and Eliminate Child Labor†	Government-funded programs that aim to prevent child labor and increase protections for vulnerable children. These include: NGO-run shelters that cater to human trafficking survivors, including children; the National School Feeding Program, which provides meals to children (grades one through seven) in all public primary schools in the country; the Remote Area Development Program, which provides a second meal to school children living in remote areas and children from marginalized communities; the Orphan Care Program, which provides orphans with meals and subsidizes the cost of school fees and transportation costs; and the Needy Children and Needy Students program, managed by MLGRD, which provides families with free meals, toiletries, and school uniforms. (26) Research indicates that these programs were active during the reporting period, but the government did not publish specific activities undertaken to implement them. (5,31)
Addressing Child Labor in Botswana*	U.S. Embassy-Gaborone-funded project, implemented by Humana People to People, a local NGO operating in Botswana that aims to raise local awareness and increase community engagement on child labor concerns, in coordination with Botswana's Minister of Labor. (39) Targets Gantsi and Tsabong, areas with high levels of poverty and close proximity to farms. During the reporting period, the project held a launch and awareness-raising event in commemoration of World Day Against Child Labor, held sensitization and training workshops, and coordinated targeted labor inspections with the Ministry of Labor's inspectorate. (39,40)

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 was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Botswana.

There are no government-run shelters that cater to child survivors of human trafficking. While the government funds and contracts with NGO-run shelters that serve this population, it does not directly provide such services. (9) An NGO reported that established shelters lack resources to attend to the needs of older children. (4) Although Botswana has programs that target child labor, the design and implementation of these programs are insufficient to fully address the scope of the problem, especially in commercial sexual exploitation, cattle herding, and domestic work.

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 Botswana (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law's light work provisions specify the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken by children age 14 and above.	2016 – 2022
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child for prostitution.	2020 – 2022
	Establish by law an age up to which education is compulsory that extends to the age of 15, the minimum age for employment.	2010 – 2022
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 50 to 72 to provide adequate coverage of approximately 1.1 million workers.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has sufficient human and financial resources to adequately enforce labor laws, including on farms and cattle posts.	2020 – 2022
	Establish a mechanism to assess civil penalties.	2022
	Institutionalize training for all labor inspectors, including training on laws related to child labor.	2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors have authorization to access worksite premises and are able to conduct inspections at farms and domestic households.	2018 – 2022

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish information about criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, including information regarding the training for criminal investigators, number of investigations related to child labor, number of prosecutions and convictions related to child labor, and penalties imposed in criminal cases related to child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement bodies have sufficient resources, personnel, and adequate training to address the worst forms of child labor.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Advisory Committee on Child Labor is active and able to carry out its intended mandate of overseeing government policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation, forced child labor, and child labor in agriculture.	2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and child wellbeing and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2017 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into relevant policies, such as the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan and the Botswana National Youth Policy.	2011 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in all sectors and activities to inform effective policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to remove educational barriers and make education accessible for all children by taking measures to reduce travel distances to reach schools; addressing language barriers and ethnic discrimination, including a lack of school materials in indigenous languages; preventing physical and sexual violence in schools; increasing resources for students with disabilities; and expanding birth registration and national identification for migrants and children born outside of health facilities.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement all key social programs related to child labor, including the shelters for victims of human trafficking, the National School Feeding Program, the Remote Area Development Program, the Orphan Care Program, and the Needy Children and Needy Students Program, and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2020 – 2022
	Establish official government-run shelters to assist child survivors of the worst forms of child labor, while ensuring that shelters have sufficient resources to attend to the care of older children.	2020 – 2022
	Develop programs to fully address the scope of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and cattle herding.	2012 – 2022

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