

In 2022, Fiji made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Fiji Bureau of Statistics carried out a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in 2021 and published the results in August 2022, providing new information on the prevalence of children engaged in child labor, including hazardous work. Additionally, the government convicted a child sex trafficker, resulting in a prison sentence. However, children in Fiji 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 agriculture. Fiji's light work provisions are not specific enough to prevent children from being involved in child labor. Furthermore, the government lacks social programs to provide services to children exploited in commercial sexual exploitation and forced domestic work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	29.3 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	50.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		117.0

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 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2021. (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	Cutting† and harvesting† sugarcane (3,4)
	Fishing† and deep-sea diving for fish, shellfish, and sea cucumbers† (3-6)
Services	Street work, including vending, washing cars, and selling fruit and other foods (3,7,8)
	Domestic work (3)
	Working in garages, retail shops, or roadside stalls (3-5)
	Garbage scavenging† (5)
	Collecting scrap metal† (3,4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,9)
	Use in the production of pornography (5)
	Forced labor in domestic work (9)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (3,10)

† 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.

Children younger than 15 are employed in agriculture, retail shops, roadside stalls, public markets, domestic work, automotive garages, and car washing businesses. Children also work part of the year as cane cutters during the

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

sugar harvesting season. (5) The 2022 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey found that 15 percent of children were involved in economic activities for more hours than legally allowed at their age. It also found that 18.4 percent of children in Fiji work under hazardous conditions that include carrying heavy loads, working with dangerous tools, operating heavy machinery, and exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity. (11)




Children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Fiji, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, including by family members, taxi drivers, foreign tourists, businesspersons, and crews on foreign fishing vessels. (9,12) Research also shows that children in Fiji are subjected to online sexual exploitation, including child pornography. (5) Parents sometimes send their children to live with families in cities or near schools to facilitate their continuing education and to perform light household work. Research found that some of these children are vulnerable to involuntary domestic work or are forced to engage in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, shelter, or school fees. (9,12) In addition, children are sexually exploited in massage parlors and brothels owned by Chinese nationals, and child sex trafficking victims are driven to hotels or private yachts at the request of foreigners. (9)

Rising levels of poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, including Tropical Cyclone Cody, increased the number of children engaging in child labor, often in street work, during which they are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. (5,9) The pandemic continued to profoundly impact students' access to education in Fiji, particularly affecting children from low-income families and single-parent families, as well as children with special education needs. (3,5) Financial barriers also prevented parents from sending their children to school because they could not meet the costs of school supplies, footwear, school uniforms, and meals for their children. In addition, children in remote areas often do not have schools in their area and have issues connecting to the internet to access online learning materials. (5)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Fiji 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 Fiji's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including identification of light work activities permissible for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 92 of the Employment Relations Promulgation (13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 40 of the Employment Relations (Administration) Regulations; Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (14,15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6 and 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 20 and 21 of the Immigration Act; Articles 102, 103, 111, and 121 of the Crimes Decree (13,16,17)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 91 and 256 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 2, 17–20, 22, and Schedule 2 of the Immigration Act; Articles 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (13,16,17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 225–227 of the Crimes Decree; Article 62A of the Juveniles (Amendment) Act (13,17-19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 58 of the Juveniles Act (13,20)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (21)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (21)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Compulsory Education Orders 1997 and 1998 (22,23)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 31 of the Constitution of Fiji (24)

* Country has no conscription (21)

The Employment Relations Promulgation specifies the conditions under which children ages 13 to 15 may engage in light work, but it does not include a list of activities that are permissible. (13)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR)	The primary agency responsible for enforcing and ensuring compliance with child labor laws and monitoring the status of child labor employment. Under the Employment Relations Promulgation, labor inspectors of MEPIR can conduct workplace inspections to identify child labor law violations and issue penalties for breaches of child labor laws. (5) Maintains a 24-hour phone line to accept reports of child labor and refers children to social services when appropriate. (3,5) Children found working illegally during inspections are generally first returned to their families, and MEPIR will involve the Department of Social Welfare if it deems the situation warrants further intervention. (5) The Employment Relations Tribunal adjudicates alleged violations of child labor provisions. (5,25) Within MEPIR, the Labor Inspection Compliance Unit raises awareness on issues of child labor and is responsible for monitoring and training the labor inspectorate. As in previous years, MEPIR collected data on child labor cases and inspections but did not publish them. (5,6)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

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

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Fiji Police Force	Investigates criminal violations related to child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. (5) Refers children found in cases of the worst forms of child labor on a case-by-case basis to the Department of Social Welfare. (3) Maintains a Human Trafficking Unit, Child Sexual Services Unit, and a separate Children's Unit, which screens cases involving children for trafficking indicators. Although anti-trafficking training is provided for new police officers, research suggests that these trainings are insufficient and investigations conducted by the police are inconsistent. (9)
Department of Immigration	Responsible for efforts to address human trafficking. (5) Enforces the Immigration Act, which includes the prohibition of trafficking in children. (5,16) Coordinates with the Fiji Police Force to investigate cases involving underage survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, which are then tried in the criminal court system. (26) Department of Immigration officials and the police meet every quarter to discuss foreign nationals involved in human trafficking, but research was unable to determine if the department took actions to address foreign nationals involved in human trafficking in 2022. (5)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, the lack of available information hinders understanding of labor law enforcement efforts.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4.5 million (3,27)	\$4.57 million‡ (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (3)	36 (5,6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (13)	Yes (13)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (13)	Yes (13)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (5)

‡ Data are from August 2022 to July 2023.

Inspectors were trained on the enforcement of child labor laws and hazardous child labor laws during the reporting period. Labor inspectors are legally allowed to enter, inspect, and examine workplaces; require employers to produce any worker or any documents or records, including registers of children; interview employers and workers; and issue penalties of \$44.71 (FJ\$100). (5) Labor inspectors are required by law to issue violations upon encountering child labor law violations. Targeted areas for inspections include high-risk areas, such as sugarcane farms located in the western and northern parts of the country. (5) The government did not provide information on the number of labor inspections and child labor violations in 2022. (5)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, the lack of available information hinders understanding of criminal law enforcement efforts.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	1 (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (5)

During the reporting period, the government sentenced a child sex trafficker to 30 months in prison. (9) The government did not provide information on the number of investigations and prosecutions initiated in 2022. (5)

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 public reporting on activities.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Coordinating Committee on Children	Coordinates child labor and child safety enforcement efforts. Comprises the Fiji Police Force, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Solicitor General's Office, the Department of Social Welfare, MEPIR, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and NGOs that work on child labor issues. (5,26,28) Research was unable to determine whether the National Coordinating Committee on Children was active during the reporting period. (5,6)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Addressed, developed, and implemented strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. A multinational strategic framework program that consisted of 14 South Pacific nations. (29) Instrumental in shaping priorities to address child labor issues in the country. The government of Fiji continued to support the implementation of this strategy in 2022. (5)
National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2021–2026)	Sets yearly targets to achieve the goals outlined in the Human Trafficking Strategy. (30) Includes a special focus on assisting child survivors of trafficking and other objectives such as strengthening counter-human trafficking mechanisms, protecting survivors, suppressing criminal networks, prosecuting traffickers, and sharing intelligence to address the sexual exploitation of children. (30,31) In 2022, the government allocated funding and staff to implement the action plan. (9,32)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (3)

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 efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	Prioritized children's rights, including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. (33,34) UNICEF Pacific facilitated the Child Protection Training for 27 welfare officers in 2022. (35–37)
Education Assistance Programs†	The Free Education Grant ensures that all children with Fiji citizenship have access to free and compulsory primary education. (38) Provides bus passes and free textbooks. Also supplies boats and motors so children and teachers can commute to school. (38,39) This grant continued during the reporting period. (5) The Food Voucher and Bus Fare Assistance program provides \$24 in food vouchers and subsidized bus fares to families with combined annual income of less than \$7,400 to offset the cost of education for children attending remote schools. (40) During the reporting period, the government continued to provide transport assistance to students, and allocated approximately \$31 million for the Free Education Grant in fiscal year 2021–2022. (3,27) The government allocated \$74.82 million to various programs promoting inclusive education for the 2022–2023 fiscal year. The government continued providing free education, free textbooks, transportation allowances, and tertiary education scholarships during the reporting period. (5)
Child Protection Program and Allowance‡	Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) Child Protection Program that raises awareness of, and enacts recommendations from, the UN CRC. (39) MWCPA Child Protection Allowance assists single mothers, widows, and children. (41) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Child Protection Program and Allowance during the reporting period.

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 Fiji.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (5)

Although Fiji has programs to address education and poverty alleviation, it has no programs to address child labor, including for children who may be sent to live with other families and subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced domestic work. (39,42) The Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation's Child Services Unit, in partnership with UNICEF, provided 5 modules of child protection training for 27 welfare officers on important aspects of case management, including interview skills, child development, and indicators of abuse. The last two modules took place in 2022. (35–37) The Department of Social Welfare operated four homes for child survivors of trafficking. (32)

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 Fiji (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 in which light work may be undertaken.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish labor law enforcement information, including the number of labor inspections conducted at the worksite, the number of child labor violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, and the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the Fiji Police Department receives adequate anti-trafficking training and investigates violations.	2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement information, including the number of investigations conducted and prosecutions initiated.	2020 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure the coordinating body is active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Child Protection Program and Allowance and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022
	Provide support services for children removed from commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced domestic work, such as housing, medical care, psychological support, and job skills training.	2010 – 2022
	Improve access to education for children in remote areas by establishing schools nearer to these communities or by improving access to adequate technology to allow for remote learning.	2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, by ensuring that school lunch, uniforms, footwear, and supplies are provided for children whose families cannot afford these essentials.	2022

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