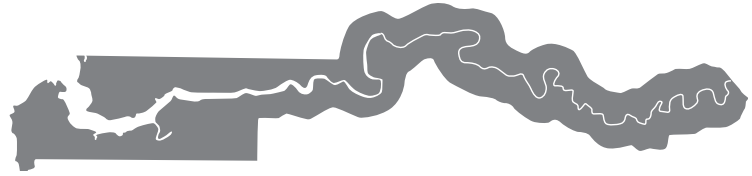


In 2022, The Gambia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Nigeria to coordinate efforts to address the trafficking of women and children.



It also provided information regarding

its criminal law enforcement activities during the reporting period. In addition, the government launched four centers to provide services to survivors of gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, including child victims. However, children in The Gambia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced begging. Gaps in the law remain, including that the minimum age for work of 18 years old is higher than the compulsory education age of 16 years old. The Gambia also lacked resources to conduct adequate enforcement efforts and has insufficient social programs to address child labor.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in The Gambia. 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	22.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	78.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	21.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		85.2

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 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2018. (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	Farming, including protecting crops against animals (3,4)
Industry	Working in carpentry, masonry, sewing, plumbing, and in metal welding workshops† (3,4) Sand mining† (5)
Services	Domestic work (3,6) Street work, including begging and vending (3,6-8) Scavenging for scrap metal at dump sites, markets, garages, and car parks (4,6,9) Working as attendants for commercial vehicles in the transportation sector (3,8) Working as auto mechanics† (3,4,6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,10-12) Forced begging by Koranic teachers (3,4,11) Forced labor in domestic work, farming, and street vending (4,11)

† 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.

In The Gambia, children are exploited in human trafficking and subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, as well as forced labor in domestic work, farming, and street vending. (11,12) Research suggests that before the COVID-19 pandemic, foreign nationals subjected children to commercial sexual exploitation in the Tourism Development Area, which consists of the areas around major beaches, hotels, and nightclubs. (4,11,13-16) The

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impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry reduced the prevalence of child exploitation in the tourism sector in 2020 and 2021—a trend which reportedly continued during the reporting period. (4,17) In The Gambia, it is common practice to send boys to receive education from Koranic teachers, or *marabouts*, who sometimes force students to engage in begging, street vending, and agricultural work. (3,12,14,18) In addition, children work in sand mines on the coast, shoveling white sand into trucks for use in the construction industry. (16)

The Constitution and Gambian law mandate free compulsory primary and lower-secondary education. Families, however, are often responsible for supplies and uniforms, exam fees, and contributions to school funds. (6,18,19) In addition, inadequate classroom infrastructure, low numbers of teachers in rural areas, lack of transportation, and limited access to clean water and toilets in schools create barriers for children to access education, increasing their vulnerability to child labor and exploitation. (3,4,6,18,20-22) Children with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing education, including the absence of special education programs outside of urban centers. (4,18,23)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Gambia 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 The Gambia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including that the age up to which children are required to attend school is below the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 45 of the Labor Act (24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 44 of the Children's Act; Articles 46 and 48 of the Labor Act (25,24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 42, 44, and 45 of the Children's Act (25)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 20 of the Constitution; Articles 2, 39–41, 47, and 58 of the Children's Act; Articles 2 and 28 of the Trafficking in Persons Act (19,25,26)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 30, and 39 of the Children's Act; Articles 2, 28, 29, 38(c), and 56 of the Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 13 of the Tourism Offenses Act (25,26,27)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 26, 27, 29–32, and 34 of the Children's Act; Articles 7–9 of the Tourism Offenses Act (25,27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 31 and 37 of the Children's Act (25)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 59 of the Children's Act (25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 59 of the Children's Act (25)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 31(c) of the Children's Act (25)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16‡	Article 18 of the Children's Act (25)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 30 of the Constitution; Article 18 of the Children's Act (19,25)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (28,29)

The Gambia permits children as young as 16 to engage in light work, and children as young as 12 to work as a child apprentice in the informal sector. While the Children's Act generally prohibits children from working in conditions that would be harmful to their health, education, or development, the Act does not determine the activities in which light work or apprenticeships may be permitted, prescribe the number of hours per week for light work or apprenticeships, or specify the conditions in which light work or apprenticeships may be undertaken. (25) The Children's Act provides for compulsory basic education. However, the law does not explicitly specify at what age basic education begins or how many years basic education lasts. (25) In addition, while children in The Gambia are required to attend school up to age 16 based on current policy, this standard makes children ages 16 through 18 vulnerable to child labor, as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. (25)

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
Department of Labor	Receives complaints about child labor. Conducts labor inspections in the formal sector, mediates disputes between employers and labor representatives, and refers serious cases to the labor courts and the Industrial Tribunal. (4) Housed under the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Regional Integration and Employment. (3,15) Research found that the Department of Labor was unable to fulfill its mandate during the reporting period due to funding shortfalls. (5)
Children's Court	Adjudicates criminal, civil, and care and protection cases involving children. Coordinates with social welfare officers from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) for the referral and care of children. (4,25,30) Research did not find information on whether the Children's Court took actions to address child labor during the reporting period.
National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP)	Investigates suspected cases of human trafficking, provides support to survivors, coordinates efforts across government agencies, and maintains a database on trafficking cases. (31) Carries out awareness-raising activities and coordinates training for law enforcement officials. Oversees the National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants, including Victims of Trafficking in The Gambia. (32,33) Receives reports of child abuse complaints from The Gambia Police Force Child Welfare Unit, which has trained child welfare officers at all major police stations. (16,20,21,34) While NAATIP received more funding than in previous years, its resources were not adequate to fulfill its mandate, leaving it dependent on support from international partners. (31)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in The Gambia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of funding.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$15,576 (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	4 (4)	4 (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (4)	31 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	5 (4)	Unknown (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (4)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (4)	N/A (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	No (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	No (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (24)	Yes (24)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (4)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (31)

In 2022, the government provided child labor training to the inspectorate's dedicated child labor inspector. (6,31) Although the number of child labor violations is unknown for the reporting period, reports state that three children were removed from worksites as a result of child labor inspections, two of whom received support from social services. (5) However, research indicates that The Gambia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties, a problem exacerbated by reported insufficient funding of the labor inspectorate. The government funded only inspectors' salaries but did not provide funding for the inspectorate at large in 2022, preventing inspectors from traveling to worksites and conducting inspections in regions and sectors in which child labor is known to occur. (4,6,35,36) In addition, previous reports state that inspectors do not inspect private homes or farms in which children may work, despite being legally permitted to do so. (20,21,24)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in The Gambia 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 lack of training covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (4)	Unknown (6,31)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (4)	5 (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	0 (6)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	0 (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (4)	No (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (33)

In cooperation with the UNODC, the government convened a training on trafficking in persons for 30 law enforcement officials in May and a second training for 30 border control officers in October. (31) In cooperation with the IOM, the government also convened a training on trafficking in persons in September for 35 tourism security officers, and a separate training in November for 26 judicial officials on prosecuting trafficking cases using a survivor-centered approach. (31) Although investigators received training on trafficking in persons, they did not receive training on all other worst forms of child labor during the reporting period. (6) In 2022, the government reported investigating five new cases of child labor involving forced labor, trafficking in persons, commercial sexual exploitation, and other illicit activity. (6) The government also allocated a fully furnished

office complex and a vehicle to support law enforcement efforts to prevent and address human trafficking. (31) Previous research indicates that penalties are not fully applied to criminal cases involving the worst forms of child labor, which can hinder criminal law enforcement efforts. (13,25,37,38)

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 taken by the government coordination mechanism to address child labor during the reporting year.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Coordination Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates child labor enforcement processes, including prosecutions of the worst forms of child labor. Led by DSW and supported by UNICEF, comprises representatives from Department of Labor, UNICEF, DSW, NAATIP, Action Aid, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Gambia Teachers Union, Young People in the Media, and the Inspector General of Police. (3) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active in 2022.

The National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) chairs The National Task Force on Trafficking in Persons, which is intended to regularly assess progress and provide recommendations for combating trafficking in persons. The Task Force met four times in the reporting period, most recently in November 2022. (31)

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 implementation of some policies related to child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2021–2025)	Directs governmental efforts to address human trafficking. Includes strategies to improve legal framework, training of law enforcement and social services, prevention and awareness, and protection for human trafficking survivors. (39) In 2022, the government allocated a monthly budget to carry out activities in support of the National Action Plan, including awareness raising, capacity development and training, and community outreach. (31)
Regional Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)	Includes MOUs with both Senegal and Nigeria to coordinate efforts to address human trafficking. The MOU with Senegal commits both countries to information sharing; improved anti-trafficking in persons laws; and prevention, protection, and assistance activities. (4) During the reporting period, The Gambia signed the MOU with Nigeria, which included commitments to coordinate on prosecution, share information, coordinate identification and protection, and facilitate the safe return of human trafficking survivors to their country of origin. (31,40)
Code of Conduct of The Gambia Tourism Authority for the Protection of Children	Raises awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry and among tourists. (16,41) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Code of Conduct of The Gambia Tourism Authority for the Protection of Children during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (21,28)

During the reporting period, the Child Labor Office of the Department of Labor, with funding from UNICEF, drafted a national Child Labor Policy, which will be the government's primary instrument in eliminating child labor in the country. (6) The government also approved Ethical Recruitment Policy Guidelines, a Pre-Departure Training Manual, and a Labor Migration Strategy to protect Gambian labor migrants, many of whom are children, from exploitation and unfair treatment in 2022. (31,42) Research was unable to locate copies of these documents.

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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 the inadequacy of programs to fully address all worst forms of child labor.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
DSW Child Welfare Drop-in Centers†	Drop-in centers run by DSW with support from international organizations, foreign NGOs, and local businesses. Provide care, educational support, and counseling to child trafficking survivors, children removed from forced labor, street children, and children exploited by Koranic schools for forced begging. (4,16,20) Research was unable to determine whether the drop-in centers were operational during the reporting period.
Conditional Cash Transfers to Islamic Religious Schools (<i>Majaalis</i>)†	Ministry of Education program in partnership with the Institute for Social Reformation, an Islamic NGO based in The Gambia, that gives Koranic schools approximately \$2 monthly for each student if Koranic teachers do not force students to beg. (4,15,21) Provides curriculum standards to Islamic schools. (4,43) Each month, a joint team of ministry officials and Institute for Social Reformation and Action representatives travels to each Koranic school participating in the program. (4) Research was unable to determine whether the program was in operation during the reporting period.
Government-Run Shelters and "One-Stop" Centers†*	Includes DSW-run shelter, which has a 50-person capacity, supports vulnerable persons including trafficking survivors and children at risk of trafficking. (31) In 2022, the government launched four "one-stop" centers to provide services, including legal aid, shelter, health care, referral assistance, and psychological services to survivors of gender-based violence and trafficking in persons. (31)

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 The Gambia.

Child trafficking survivors may receive care from the government-run drop-in centers, privately operated institutions, or in their own residence as appropriate, and still receive government-provided resources regardless of the chosen option. (32,44) Although The Gambia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. Programs do not reach all children working in agriculture and domestic work or those vulnerable to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and street work. (4,21)

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 The Gambia (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 and child apprenticeship provisions specify the activities and conditions in which work may be undertaken, and prescribe the number of hours per week such work may be undertaken.	2017 – 2022
	Increase the compulsory education age from 16 years old to 18 years old to align with the minimum age for work.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that agencies responsible for labor law and criminal law enforcement—including the Department of Labor, the Children's Court, and the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons—are adequately funded by the government and able to fulfill their mandates.	2018 – 2022
	Publish information on labor inspectorate funding and the number of child labor violations found on an annual basis.	2021 – 2022
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating routine inspections rather than performing inspections solely based on complaints received and ensure these inspections target sectors prone to the use of child labor.	2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 4 to 24 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate is fully funded and has the resources and capabilities to conduct inspections in all sectors, including at private homes and farms.	2017 – 2022

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that criminal law enforcement officers receive training related to child labor and ensure training covers all worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, and the use of children in illicit activity.	2022
	Ensure that criminal penalties for the worst forms of child labor are consistently applied to deter violations.	2016 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Coordination Committee on Child Labor is active and able to carry out its intended mandate of coordinating child labor enforcement processes, including prosecutions of the worst forms of child labor.	2018 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement the Code of Conduct of The Gambia Tourism Authority for the Protection of Children and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2022
	Adopt, implement, and publish the National Child Labor Policy and ensure it addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor.	2021 – 2022
	Provide public copies of policies addressing child labor, including the Ethical Recruitment Policy Guidelines, Pre-Departure Training Manual, and the Labor Migration Strategy.	2022
Social Programs	Ensure that children can complete compulsory schooling by subsidizing or defraying the cost of supplies, uniforms, transportation, and other fees.	2010 – 2022
	Enhance opportunities for children to access education by providing adequate classroom facilities, clean water, and sanitation; ensuring accessibility for students with disabilities; and increasing the number of teachers in rural areas.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key social programs, including the Child Welfare Drop-In Centers and the Conditional Cash Transfer Program, and publish results of activities implemented during the reporting period.	2022
	Expand existing social programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, including all worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2022

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