

In 2022, Haiti made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government certified 29 new labor inspectors and trained them on child labor issues in the informal sector. Additionally, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund, the government created a new coordination mechanism dedicated to child protection issues. However, children in Haiti 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 and domestic work. Minimum age protections for work apply only to children with a formal employment contract, which does not comply with international standards that require all children to be protected. In addition, Haiti lacks a clear minimum age for domestic work and a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to children. Furthermore, social programs to address child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem, particularly in domestic work, agriculture, and child trafficking.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Haiti. 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	34.4 (815,993)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	34.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary Completion Rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from *Enquête Mortalité, Morbidité et Utilisation des Services (DHS)*, 2012. (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	Raising livestock (3)
	Fishing (3-6)
Industry	Construction (4-6)
Services	Domestic work (5,7)
	Selling alcohol† and tobacco (3,4)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and washing cars (4-9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, street vending, and begging (4,5,7-10)
	Use in illicit activities, including by criminal groups in drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,7,10,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (7,10)

† 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.

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Reports indicate there are between 150,000 and 300,000 child domestic workers in Haiti. (8) Many of Haiti's human trafficking cases involve children subjected to forced labor as domestic workers. These children, exploited in what is commonly referred to as the *restavèk* system, are often physically abused, sexually exploited, and uncompensated for their services. (5,12) Some parents who are unable to care for their children send them to residential care centers or to relatives or strangers who are expected to provide the children with food, shelter, and schooling in exchange for household work. In practice, some of these children receive care and access to education, while many others become victims of labor exploitation and abuse. (7,13-15) In addition, Haiti has more than 750 orphanages that house more than 30,000 children who may be vulnerable to human trafficking and child labor. Research indicates that some children in orphanages engage in child labor as domestic workers and are prevented from attending school. (10,16-18) Children are also often forced into commercial or transactional sex to fund basic needs such as school-related expenses. (19) In addition, criminal gangs recruit children as young as age 10 and subject them to sexual exploitation, pornography, and forced criminal activity. (9,19)




Many children in Haiti are not registered at birth, and unregistered children are not able to access social services and educational programs provided by the government. (3) According to reports, approximately 30 percent of children ages 1 to 5 five lack birth certificates or any other official documentation. Children born in rural communities are less likely to be documented than children in urban areas. (20)

There are significant barriers to education in Haiti, especially in rural areas, including the country's extreme poverty, security risks, language barriers, limited availability of teachers, dilapidated school premises, and overall lack of school infrastructure. (10,21) Moreover, because approximately 80 percent of all existing schools are private, most Haitian children are enrolled in private schools that charge tuition and other fees, making education prohibitively expensive for many families. (10,21,22) In addition, estimates show that approximately 10 percent of students drop out of school before grade six and 40 percent before the end of grade nine, making these children more vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (21,23) Another factor limiting access to education is the Ministry of Education's requirement that only children between the ages of 11 and 13 are allowed to transition to secondary school, while over this age limit must integrate into a special group that attends school during the evening. (24,25) However, research did not find evidence that schools provide instruction during the evening for special groups. (26) Research also indicates that less than 14 percent of children with disabilities attend school, with only 3.5 percent of an estimated 120,000 children with disabilities attending school in Port-au-Prince. (19,20)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Haiti 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 Haiti's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work that does not meet international standards.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Articles 2, 340 513, and 515 of the Labor Code; Article 10 of the Law Organizing and Regulating Labor (27,28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 10, 333–335, 513, and 515 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Act on the Prohibition and Elimination of All Forms of Abuse, Violence, Ill Treatment, or Inhumane Treatment Against Children (Act of 2003) (27,29)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Articles 333–336 of the Labor Code (27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Articles 4, 513, and 515 of the Labor Code; Article 2 of the Act of 2003; Articles 1.1, 11, 15, and 21 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (27,29,30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 2 of the Act of 2003; Articles 1.1, 11, 12, 15, and 21 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (29,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Act of 2003; Article 281 of the Penal Code; Article 1.1, 11, 12, and 21 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (29-31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 47–51, and 72 of the Law on the Control and Suppression of Illicit Drug Trafficking; Article 2 of the Act of 2003 (29,32)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 268 of the Constitution (33)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 70 of the Penal Code; Article 2 of the Act of 2003 (29, 31)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 23 of the Decree on the Reorganization of the Haitian Education System (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 32.1 and 33 of the Constitution (33)

The Labor Code, which establishes the penalty for violations of the minimum age for work, applies only to workers with a formal employment agreement, a stipulation that does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected under the law establishing a minimum age for work. (27,35) Furthermore, as the minimum age for work is 16, children age 15 are vulnerable to exploitative child labor because they are not required to attend school but also are not yet legally permitted to work. (27,34) It is also unclear whether there is a minimum age for domestic work because the Act on the Prohibition and Elimination of All Forms of Abuse, Violence, Ill Treatment, or Inhumane Treatment Against Children of 2003 (Act of 2003) annulled Chapter 9 of the Labor Code, which set the minimum age for domestic work at age 12. (27,29,35) The labor Code prohibits children under age 18 from working in establishments that sell alcohol and from working at night in industrial enterprises. (28,36) However, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover agriculture, an economic sector in which children are exposed to hazardous substances and to temperatures that can damage their health. (28,35-37) Furthermore, although the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes trafficking for forced labor, servitude, and debt bondage, slavery is not criminally prohibited. (30) Research could not find evidence of any other legal provision criminally prohibiting slavery. Moreover, while Haiti's Constitution establishes the age for compulsory military recruitment at age 18 and sources suggest recruitment materials set the minimum age for voluntary recruitment at that age, research could not find evidence of a law that establishes the age for voluntary recruitment. (3,33,38,39)

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 Social Affairs and Labor (MAST)	Enforces laws related to child labor by receiving complaints, conducting investigations, referring cases to juvenile courts, and issuing employment permits to approve certain forms of labor for children between ages 15 and 18. (7,8,28) Develops and implements programs to raise awareness of child labor and provide social services to child survivors of labor exploitation. Its agents at the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (IBESR) perform child protection inspections, which include following up on reported incidents of child labor and are responsible for accrediting residential care centers. (7)
Brigade for the Protection of Minors (BPM)	Investigates crimes involving the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Submits investigations to judicial authorities for criminal prosecution and refers child survivors to IBESR. (7) Housed within the Haitian National Police, maintains 22 offices around the country, including 2 offices along the Haiti-Dominican Republic border. (7)
POLIFRONT	Enforces Haiti's Customs Code and investigates transnational crimes, including child trafficking. (7) Also responsible for referring cases of vulnerable migrants, including minors, to IBESR. Serves as the Border Police Unit of the Haitian National Police. (7) Operates at the border crossings of Ouanaminthe, Anse-à-Pitres, and Malpasse. (9,40,41)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Haiti took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, the government did not provide sufficient data on its labor law enforcement efforts, which limits the ability to assess its efforts.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8,9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (27)	Yes (27)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Unknown (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (8)

In February 2022, the Haitian government, in partnership with the ILO, Lumos Foundation, and Better Work Haiti, conducted training on preventing forced labor and labor trafficking with focused sessions on the vulnerabilities faced by children living in orphanages and working in the informal sector. This training resulted in the certification of 29 new labor inspectors. (8) However, reporting indicates that the lack of sufficient resources, such as for transportation, fuel, and appropriately equipped workplaces, hampers the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's (MAST) enforcement efforts. This includes the Institute of Social Welfare and Research's (IBESR) capacity to enforce child labor laws by conducting an adequate number of labor inspections. (3,4,7,11) In addition, the prevalence of gang-controlled areas in the country also hampers general law enforcement, including labor law enforcement. (9) According to IBESR, inspectors receive insufficient training overall on child labor issues. (10) Research also indicates that Haiti does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,4,7,11,42,43)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Haiti took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial and human resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (26)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	466 (10)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	24 (10)	32 (9)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (8)

In 2022, reports indicate that the Brigade for the Protection of Minors (BPM) continued to lack an adequate number of agents, and that training, equipment, transportation, and funding are deficient, all of which hampered BPM's ability to enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (4,6-10,40) However, a referral mechanism between BPM, IBESR, and NGOs is in place to provide reintegration services to survivors of the worst forms of child labor. (3-10,26) BPM also manages the “1-8-8” hotline, which receives notifications of alleged violations related to the worst forms of child labor. (3,44) However, the hotline functions exclusively in Port-au-Prince, which makes reporting cases involving the worst forms of child labor more difficult in rural areas. (6,9,16)

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).

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Tripartite Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Develops policies, approves programs, and coordinates, monitors, and evaluates efforts to address child labor in Haiti. (10,26,45) Chaired by MAST and receives technical support from ILO. (10,45) Reports indicate it was active in 2022. (8)

In 2022, the government created the Child Protection Sub-Sector under the direction of IBESR and with the support of UNICEF to improve coordination of child protection issues. (8,9)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a policy related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation of the key national policy.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Social Protection and Promotion Policy	Aims to build institutional resilience for social protection and promotion in response to economic shocks and health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiated under a safety net program called <i>Kore Lavi</i> and funded by USAID. (7,46) Consists of four major pillars, including childhood social care and efforts to support employment and employability. Lines of effort under these two pillars include identification and removal of children from work and vocational training for youth, among other activities. (7) Past efforts include the World Bank partnering with MAST and WFP to deliver cash transfers to targeted households, and IDB partnering with WFP and the Economic and Social Assistance Fund to deliver food and cash to vulnerable households in several departments of the country. (7,46) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

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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 efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Special Program of Free Education (PROSGATE)†	Replaced the National Free Education Program. (47) Aims to increase poor children's access to education. Includes school grants intended to eliminate school fees and for accelerated learning programs for students who are behind in school. (48-50) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period.
Providing an Education of Quality in Haiti (2016–2022)	\$30 million World Bank-implemented program that aims to strengthen public management of the education sector; improve learning conditions, and increase enrollment of students in selected public and non-public primary schools. Reporting indicates this program was active in 2022. (51)

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 the Republic of Haiti.

Although Haiti has programs that target child labor and its root causes, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in domestic work, agriculture, and child trafficking. (6,7)

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 Haiti (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that minimum age for work protections apply to all children, including those without formal employment contracts.	2014 – 2022
	Clarify the minimum age for work, including for domestic work.	2009 – 2022
	Adopt a list of hazardous occupations and activities, and ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include work in hazardous agricultural environments.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits slavery.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes a minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military, at age 18 or at age 16, with safeguards for voluntariness.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2021 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age from 15 to 16 so that it aligns with the minimum age for work.	2017 – 2022
Enforcement	Collect and publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including on labor inspectorate funding; the number of labor inspectors; the number of labor inspections conducted; the number of violations found and total penalties imposed and collected; and whether unannounced inspections were carried out.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the number of labor and criminal law enforcement agents, training, and material and financial resources for labor and criminal law enforcement agencies are sufficient to adequately enforce laws related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2022
	Expand the reach of hotlines operated by the Brigade for the Protection of Minors and the Institute of Social Welfare and Research to facilitate reporting of child exploitation cases in areas beyond Port-au-Prince, including in rural areas.	2013 – 2022
	Collect and publish complete information on the number of investigations undertaken, convictions achieved, and penalties imposed related to child labor crimes.	2020 – 2022
	Employ at least 129 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 5.2 million people.	2020 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that the National Social Protection and Promotion Policy is implemented.	2017 – 2022

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Ensure all children are able to obtain birth registration documents and expand access to identity documents to ensure children have access to education and other social protection mechanisms.	2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education and increase accessibility for all children by increasing the number of public schools and teachers, especially in rural areas; improving school infrastructure and safety; ensuring that public schools address language barriers; meeting the specific educational needs of vulnerable populations, including unregistered children and children with disabilities; and ensuring that children who start their education late or repeat grades are allowed to transition to secondary school.	2009 – 2022
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, particularly in domestic work, agriculture, and child trafficking.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that all social programs designed to address child labor are active and fulfilling their mandates as intended.	2019 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2021 – 2022

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