

In 2022, Honduras made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor updated the hazardous work list, which awaits ministerial approval, and held a public expo to raise awareness of child labor. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security also approved the creation of a child labor seal to incentivize the private sector to implement good practices and promote compliance with child labor prohibitions.

In addition, the government replaced the Better Life

Voucher program with the Solidarity Network conditional cash transfer program for families in some of the poorest towns in the country to ensure children stay in school. However, children in Honduras are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. They are also used to carry out illicit activities, including selling and trafficking drugs. Children also engage in child labor in the production of coffee, melons, and lobsters. Labor law enforcement agencies lack the financial and human resources necessary to fulfill their mandates, identifying no child labor law violations in 2022 and decreasing the number of criminal investigations conducted and prosecutions initiated compared with the previous reporting period. Additionally, social programs that aim to address child labor in agriculture have failed to address the problem, and other social programs are needed to address child labor in fishing, mining, domestic work, and forced begging.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Honduras.

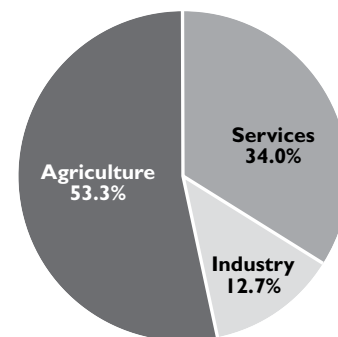
Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	9.0 (168,348)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	87.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		80.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM), 2019. (2)

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



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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of melon, coffee, corn, and okra (3-8)
	Harvesting shrimp† (3)
	Fishing,† including diving for lobster† (9,10)
Industry	Artisanal mining, † activities unknown (9)
	Construction,† activities unknown(5,6,8-11)
Services	Washing car windows, begging, vending, and performing† on the streets for tips (11,12)
	Scavenging in garbage dumps† (13)
	Domestic work† (5,6,8)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Forced labor in fishing, mining, construction, and in the hospitality industry (9)
	Forced begging, street vending, and domestic service (5,6,8,9,14)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,6,8-10)
	Use in illicit activities, including by gangs in committing extortion, and selling and trafficking drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,6,8-11,15)

† 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.

According to Honduras' National Institute of Statistics, 325,499 children between the ages of 5 and 17 were working in 2022, with 62 percent working in rural areas and 41 percent working in agriculture or fishing. (8) These numbers do not incorporate estimates for children used by gangs. (8) Reports indicate that children from indigenous and Afro-descendant groups are particularly vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (8,11) In particular, boys from the Miskito Afro-descendant community are vulnerable to forced labor in fishing, mining, construction, and hospitality industries. (9) Many of these children choose to migrate and, once en route, these migrant children are vulnerable to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (16)




Children in Honduras are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes by family members and friends. (5,8-10) Children are also forced to work as street vendors and domestic servants. Gangs force children to commit extortion, engage in prostitution, transport weapons, traffic drugs, and serve as lookouts. (5,8-10) In addition, Honduras is a destination country for child sex tourists from the United States and Canada. (9)

In 2022, barriers to education in the country continued due to COVID-19 pandemic related school closures and children's lack of access to the internet, cellphone coverage, or technical equipment required to attend virtual classes. (5,6,8) Hurricanes Eta and Iota worsened pandemic related school closures by further damaging infrastructure. (8) Access to education is often limited, especially for children living in rural areas, where there is a lack of funding for schools, and in many cases, limited infrastructure. (11) Reports indicate that in some regions of the country, especially in La Mosquitia, language barriers exist as the teachers do not speak local languages or dialects. (5,8,17) Violence originating from gang activity, including recruitment and territorial disputes, also presents barriers to access for both children and educators, causing some schools to drastically reduce their enrollment. (5,8,10,11) Additionally, children from indigenous and Afro-descendant groups face persistent difficulties in obtaining access to education. (17,18) There is also a particularly high dropout rate among children of indigenous and African descent. (17,18) Finally, children with disabilities attend schools at a lower rate than the general population, and the National Center for Social Sector Information states that 43 percent of persons with disabilities received no formal education. (19) Schools throughout the country have shortages of materials, personnel, and infrastructure. Other Barriers to education include a lack of sanitation and electricity in schools, a lack of transportation to school, and the costs of school fees, uniforms, and supplies. (5,8,10)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Honduras 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's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Article 120 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 15 of the Executive Agreement STSS-211-01; Article 32 of the Labor Code (20-22)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 and 122 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016 (20,21,23)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016; Article 8 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (20,23)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 221 and 222 of the Penal Code (20,24)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013; Articles 219 and 220 of the Penal Code (20,24,25)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 219, 220, 257, and 259–262 of the Penal Code (20,21,24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013 (20,21,25,26)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 12 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (20)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (20)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17	Articles 8, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Articles 36 and 39 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence (21,27)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 7, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Article 36 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 171 of the Constitution (21,27,28)

* Country has no conscription (20)

During the reporting period, the government proposed an update to its hazardous work list. This update would expand the list to include domestic work and the production and handling of textile boards, car accessories, harnesses, and electrical circuits. (8) This reform is pending ministerial approval. (8) Despite the minimum working age being set at 18, children in Honduras are required to attend school only up to age 17. This standard makes children age 17 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work without restriction on hours and times of work. (20-22,27)

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 Social Security (SETRASS)	Conducts labor inspections and enforces child labor laws through the General Directorate of Social Welfare and the General Directorate of Labor Inspections. Created by the Labor Inspection Law enacted in 2017 through Decree Num. 178-2016. (5,29,30)
Public Ministry	Carries out criminal prosecutions and directs the investigation of crimes in the country, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (10,31) Through its Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children, prosecutes crimes with child victims, including crimes related to child trafficking, forced labor, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Also coordinates with the National Police to investigate crimes and protect survivors. (10,31) Through its Technical Agency for Criminal Investigations, investigates and provides technical support for criminal prosecutions, including by the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children, such as those related to human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and child pornography. (10) Through its Unit Against Trafficking in Persons, Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Illicit Human Smuggling (UTESCTP), coordinates with domestic and international enforcement agencies to carry out anti-trafficking in persons operations and prosecutions. (14,32)
National Police	Investigates crimes related to the worst forms of child labor, through their Police Investigation Directorate. Also works with the Public Ministry and the Directorate of Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (DINAF), as well as other government entities on operations to remove children from child labor. (5)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Honduras took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (SETRASS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including an insufficient number of labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3,300,000 (6)	\$3,496,488 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	162 (6)	109 (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	14,299 (33)	19,825 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (6)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (6)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (6)	0 (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (22)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (6)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (8)

The Government of Honduras decreased the size of its inspectorate by 53 following staffing changes related to the start of the new administration and does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (6,8,34) Reports also indicate that additional training on child labor issues is needed for labor inspectors. (33) Despite these gaps, 19,825 labor inspections were conducted in 2022. Of these inspections, 278 inspections were directly related to child labor. (8) This is a high number of inspections conducted by each inspector, and it is unknown whether this high number affects the quality of such inspections. (35) These inspections were carried out in the language spoken by most workers and in the commercial, service, and agricultural sectors. (8) However, the number of inspections conducted is still insufficient to address the scope of labor violations in the country, including child labor violations. (5,6,8,11) Reports indicate that most inspections are conducted in the urban areas of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, leaving rural areas and indigenous communities, in which hazardous activities in agriculture, fishing, and diving are concentrated, with insufficient inspections to address the scope of the problem. (9) Inspectors also do not conduct inspections in the informal

sector unless there is a formal complaint. (5,6,8) In addition, reports indicate that the level of funding and resources for the General Directorate for Labor Inspections is insufficient. (5,8,11) In particular, inspectors did not have sufficient transportation and travel funding to carry out inspections. (6,8,33) Finally, although a reciprocal mechanism exists between labor authorities and social services, there is no evidence to suggest that this mechanism has been used to assist any children. (36)

Criminal Law Enforcement

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

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (6)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	10 (6)	4 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	12 (6)	3 (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (6)	1 (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (6)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (6)	Yes (8)

Reports indicate that criminal law enforcement agencies in the country have a limited capacity to investigate trafficking in persons cases in most regions of Honduras due to staffing limitations. (37)

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 Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor	Coordinates government policies and efforts on child labor issues. Chaired by SETRASS and includes officials from eight government ministries, DINAF, the Supreme Court, and other government entities. (29,38) Oversees regional sub-commissions, led by SETRASS and DINAF officials, which implement national efforts at the local level. (29,38) During the reporting period, the commission reviewed advancements and challenges related to the 2021–2025 Roadmap for the Elimination of Child Labor, voted to approve an updated hazardous work list, and held a public expo to raise awareness about child labor. (8,39) The commission's technical committee met on several occasions with private sector and labor groups to get their input on a revised hazardous work list and review a special compliance seal to incentivize business compliance with child labor laws. The technical committee also met to craft a planning strategy for the commission. (8)

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
Roadmap for the Elimination of Child Labor in Honduras (2021–2025)	Aims to eliminate all forms of child labor by 2025. Established in 2021 by the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor. (6,8) The plan calls for increased efforts to identify risk factors for vulnerability to child labor; establish a common, integrated protocol for responding to child labor situations; and increase awareness of child labor laws and labor rights. (8) Works at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels and addresses poverty, health, education, and social development. The government continued to support this policy in 2022 by meeting several times throughout the year to review advancements and challenges related to the roadmap. (6,35,40)

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Policy	Description & Activities
Strategic Plan to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Honduras (2016–2022)	Established national priorities to address commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking in four principal areas: (1) prevention and awareness; (2) investigation, prosecution, and punishment of violations; (3) detection, assistance, and protection of victims; and (4) coordination and cooperation. (33,41) During the reporting period, members of the Inter-Institutional Commission against Sexual and Commercial Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons announced the launch of "Blue Hearts", the objective of the program is to spread awareness of human trafficking crimes among government agencies, local committees, the private sector, NGOs, and civil society. This project is guided by the Strategic Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons. (42)
U.S.-Honduras Labor Rights Monitoring and Action Plan	Aims to improve the enforcement of labor laws, including laws related to child labor, by implementing legal and policy reforms, strengthening SETRASS, enhancing enforcement activities, and increasing outreach efforts. (43) USDOL and SETRASS continued activities and coordination during the reporting period. (8) As part of this effort, the USDOL and USDOS continued to finance programs to educate youth who are at-risk of labor exploitation, provide technical assistance for an electronic case management system to improve enforcement of labor laws, and develop a system to detect and prevent child labor in the coffee sector. The Government of Honduras continued to maintain a dialogue with the private sector and labor leaders to address systemic labor challenges. (8)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (44,45)

In 2022, SETRASS introduced a child labor seal to incentivize the private sector to implement good practices and promote compliance with national and international standards for preventing child labor. (8)

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
Solidarity Network (<i>Red Solidaria</i>)†	Created in 2022 to replace the Better Life Voucher. Consists of a conditional cash transfer of \$163 annually to 350,000 families in some of the poorest towns in the country, with the condition that families vaccinate their children and keep them enrolled in school. (8) The program also includes \$32.4 million in investments in health, education, preventing teenage pregnancy, infrastructure, and housing projects. (8)
Program to Combat Child Forced Begging†	DINAF program that identifies and rescues children who are subjected to forced begging and raises awareness of child forced begging through media. (8) During the reporting period, this program carried out a campaign to assist children living and working on the streets by providing humanitarian aid to families and referring them to the appropriate government services. DINAF also reported providing protection services to children who were being used for street begging. (46) The program also supported a government expo to raise awareness of child labor as part of activities to commemorate International Day Against Child Labor. (8)
Program to Prevent Sex Tourism Involving Children and Adolescents†	Government program that aims to raise awareness and provide training on preventing sex tourism for the tourism industry. The Honduran Tourist Board, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Honduras Tourism Institute jointly implemented this program. (8, 11) The Honduran Tourism Institute and the Ministry of Tourism participated in a 3-day training on preventing sexual exploitation in travel and tourism. (8)

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 Honduras.

Although the Government of Honduras funds or participates in social programs to address child labor, research did not identify programs to assist children working in sectors such as fishing, mining, and domestic work, or that address the illegal recruitment of children into gang-related activities. In addition, social programs that address child labor in agriculture do not appear to sufficiently address the scope of the problem. (33)

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 Honduras (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Raise the compulsory education age from 17 to 18 to align with the minimum age for work.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Carry out labor inspections in areas in which child labor is prevalent, such as rural areas, the informal sector, and indigenous communities in which children engage in hazardous activities.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that labor and criminal law enforcement agencies have sufficient funding and transportation to carry out their mandates nationwide.	2010 – 2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 109 to 278 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 4.2 million people.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that all labor inspectors receive sufficient training on child labor issues to effectively carry out their duties.	2014 – 2022
	Publish criminal law enforcement information on the training for criminal investigators and penalties imposed related to the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the referral mechanism is being used by the labor inspectorate to refer children to the appropriate social services.	2022
	Ensure the number of inspections conducted by labor inspectors is appropriate to ensure the quality and scope of inspections.	2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education by increasing funding to schools; ensuring that teachers speak local languages or dialects; building more schools, particularly secondary schools, and schools in rural areas; enhancing efforts to protect students from gang recruitment and violence; ensuring children with disabilities have access to schooling; and removing barriers such as school fees, costs for uniforms, and lack of transportation.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that social programs reach the children who are most vulnerable to child labor, including children of African descent and indigenous children.	2017 – 2022
	Expand social programs that address child labor in agriculture and create programs to assist children engaged in child labor in fishing, mining, domestic service, and illicit gang activity.	2009 – 2022

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