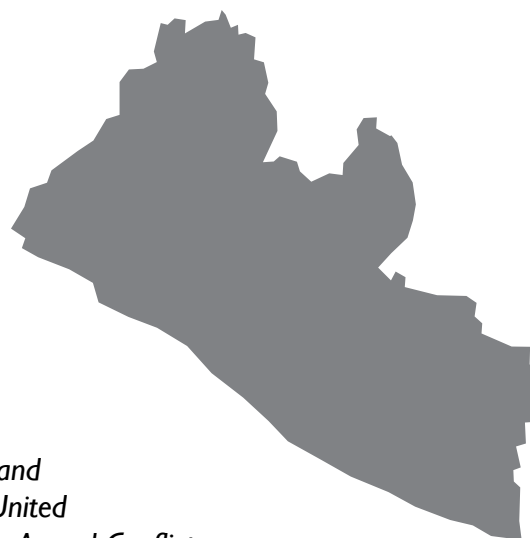


In 2022, Liberia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government signed a new hazardous work list, which identified specific occupations and tasks prohibited for children, including sugarcane cleaning and harvesting, rubber tapping, palm cutting, bush clearing, and harvesting cocoa. The government also almost doubled the number of labor inspections it conducted, from 556 in 2021 to 1,044 in 2022. Finally, the government designed Standard Operating Procedures to guide the operations of Liberia's child labor monitoring systems at the district level. However, children in Liberia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the production of rubber and the mining of gold and diamonds. Liberia has yet to accede to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict or the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. Moreover, social programs are not sufficient to address the scope of the problem in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Liberia. 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	30.4 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	80.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	28.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		60.6

These data are not comparable with data presented in last year's report due to changes in survey source, survey questionnaire, or age range surveyed.

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2019–2020. (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	Production of rubber, including cutting trees with machetes and using acid (3-7)
	Production of charcoal and bricks (4,5,7)
	Farming activities, including production of cocoa, coffee, cassava, and sugarcane (4,5,7)
Industry	Mining diamonds and gold, including washing gravel and using mercury and cyanide (3-5,7,8)
	Crushing stone (5,6)
	Construction, including carrying heavy loads† (5,7)
Services	Domestic work (4,7)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and selling goods (4-7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (4,5,7)
	Forced labor in domestic work, street vending, mining, begging, and work on small rubber plantations. (3,4,7,8)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3-5,7)

† 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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While the government has yet to collect comprehensive data on child labor activities to inform policies and social programs on a national level, there are reports that children in rural communities engage in rubber tapping and coal burning activities, while children in cities and surrounding urban communities crush rocks, engage in domestic work, and sell goods. There are also reports that some children are subjected to hazardous labor in the artisanal mining of gold and alluvial diamonds, with tasks that include washing gravel and working in mining shafts. (4,5,7) There have been anecdotal reports that children are also used to sell illicit drugs within the country by adults as a cover to evade arrest by law enforcement. (4,5,7) Human traffickers generally operate independently and are often family members or respected members of the community who promise poor rural relatives and neighbors better economic or educational opportunities for themselves (in the case of young women) or their children, but instead the young women and children are subjected to domestic servitude, forced begging, forced labor, street vending, and occasionally sex trafficking. Children are also transported from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone for work. (4,9,10) In addition, there are reports that children residing at various orphanages within the capital of Monrovia and in other parts of the country are vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to a lack of basic necessities at the orphanages, including food. (5)

Section 9 of the Children's Law mandates free basic education from grades one to nine, but the cost of registration fees, uniforms, transportation, books, and school supplies limits access to education for some children. In addition, family members often require children to work long hours, denying them the ability to attend school, even if they could afford to do so. (4,5) In schools throughout rural communities, few teachers are on the official Ministry of Education payroll and communities supplement their school's teaching force by recruiting and paying small stipends for volunteer teachers. (11) For secondary school students (grades 10–12), reports indicate there is a shortage of teachers, insufficient learning materials, a lack of educational facilities, and inadequate transportation, all of which limit access to education. (4-6) In addition, some teachers sexually exploit students in exchange for the promise of good grades, resulting in children avoiding or dropping out of school. (4-6) Research also indicates the ongoing practice of temporarily removing boys and girls from formal schooling to participate in initiation rituals that transition a child into adulthood; many of these children may not return to school after their participation in these initiation ceremonies, making them more vulnerable to child labor. (4-6)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Liberia has ratified most 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).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Articles 2.3 and 21.2 of the Decent Work Act (12)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 7 and Section 9.1 of the Children's Law (13)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 21.4 of the Decent Work Act, Hazardous and Light Work List of 2023. (12,14)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 2.2 of the Decent Work Act; Article 7, Section 8 of the Children's Law; Article 12 of the Constitution; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (12-15)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 7, Section 8 of the Children's Law; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (13,14,16)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Article 3, Section 21 of the Children's Law; Article 1 of the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons Within the Republic of Liberia (12-14,16)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Chapter 16 of the Penal Code (12,17)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 2.3 of the Decent Work Act; Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (12,13)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (13)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (13)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14	Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act (13,18)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act (13,19)

* Country has no conscription (20)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor (MOL) signed the Hazardous and Light Work List for Children under age 18 which identifies specific occupations and tasks prohibited for children, including sugarcane cleaning and harvesting, rubber tapping, palm cutting, bush clearing, and harvesting cocoa. In addition, 750 copies of the updated list were sent to regional labor ministries throughout the country for distribution. (7,19) In 2022, Liberia ratified ILO Convention No. 138: Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. This convention will go into effect on June 13, 2023. (21)

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 Labor (MOL)	Conducts worksite inspections and addresses child labor violations. (4,5)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Promotes and executes the rule of law for public safety, including the prosecution of child labor perpetrators. (8)
Women and Children Protection Section	A division within the Liberia National Police (LNP) that investigates child endangerment cases and human trafficking in cooperation with the LNP's Anti-Trafficking Unit and the Liberia Immigration Service. (5)

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Labor Law Enforcement

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

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$25,000 (4)	\$25,000 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	55 (4)	54 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (23)	No (23)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	No (4)	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksites	556 (4)	1,044 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (4)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (4)	N/A (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (4)	N/A (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (23)	Yes (23)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (4)	No (7)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for Liberia's workforce which includes approximately 2.4 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in transitioning economies, Liberia would employ about 60 labor inspectors. (7)

During the reporting period, the government trained 14 inspectors on child labor laws in Montserrado County. In addition, the MOL awarded contracts to ten local NGOs to conduct awareness training on Trafficking in Persons. (24,25) The government has a draft referral mechanism for child labor but, due to resource capacity and coordination constraints, cases were still handled outside the formal pathways. (7)

Generally, labor inspections are conducted in the formal sector and not in the informal sector in which children are more likely to be engaged in child labor. Inspectors are able to inspect private farms or homes for domestic child laborers but did not do so in practice during the reporting period. (5) In addition, lack of funding and logistical support results in the underutilization of the labor inspectorate's complaint mechanism. (4,9) Although inspectors cannot assess penalties, they can impose corrective measures, such as issuing notices of compliance, filing a complaint with the hearing board, and reporting violations to the MOL, which can assess penalties for violations. (5,6,25) However, the lack of penalty assessment authorization, limited funding, and insufficient fines, combined with poor opportunities for revenue generation, hamper the labor inspectorate's enforcement of child labor laws. (4,6,9,13) Law enforcement officials have reported that, due to lack of funding, officials who identify child labor or human trafficking cases are often expected to become personally responsible for the survivors' welfare, whether by providing financial support or taking children into their own homes. In addition, child labor is typically addressed as an issue of child endangerment, thereby causing a lack of reliable data on violations of child labor laws. (6,9,14)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Liberia 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 financial resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	8 (4)	0 (25)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (4)	0 (25)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (4)	0 (25)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	0 (25)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (7)

Although the MOL maintains a human trafficking hotline that can receive calls related to child labor, very few child labor calls come in and the hotline is irregularly staffed by contractors for only part of the day. (5,7,25)

Research indicates that the Liberia National Police (LNP)'s Women and Children Protection Section had limited training, financial, and physical resources, which hampered its ability to carry out investigations and other enforcement duties. (7,9)

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 financial support.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL)	Coordinates government and civil society activities concerning child labor. Led by the MOL and comprising representatives from 16 organizations, including international and civil society organizations. Assists in coordinating child labor investigations. (4,7) Seeks to reform national child labor laws and create a national child labor database, which would assist surveys on the extent of child labor issues in Liberia. (26) During the reporting period, and in addition to other trainings throughout the year, NACOMAL participated in a 2-day workshop along with civil society partners and NGOs, organized by the Winrock ATLAS Project, to design Standard Operating Procedures for the Child Labor Monitoring Systems at the district level in Liberia. NACOMAL also increased communication and trainings with other government agencies and NGOs to improve efforts to address child labor and human trafficking issues. (7) Despite these efforts, NACOMAL reported insufficient funding to pursue their mandates and continuing coordination issues remained, specifically with the anti-human trafficking task force. (5,7)

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 a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor	Aims to reduce child labor and the worst forms of child labor by 50 percent by 2030 through three strategic objectives, including increasing public awareness on the causes and consequences of the worst forms of child labor; strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks to reduce child labor; and increasing social services and protection for children of vulnerable households. (27)
National Action Plan for Trafficking in Persons (2019–2024)	Outlines the government's anti-trafficking efforts, including those for child victims, and creates benchmark goals related to human trafficking. (8,28) Establishes roles and responsibilities for coordinating government assistance to human trafficking victims and provides shelter and care to children who may have been victims of human trafficking. (28)
National Child Welfare, Social Welfare, and Protection Policy	Focuses on the implementation and enforcement of existing child protection laws and prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that aim to assist children subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking. (29)

Child labor elimination and prevention strategies are not included in the Revised National Youth Policy, the Education Sector Plan, the Rubber Industry Master Plan, nor the National Employment Policy. (18,30-33)

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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 child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaign†	Aims to raise public awareness of human trafficking through the use of radio and billboard messages. During the reporting period, with international support, Liberian security agencies conducted events for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, which included trainings on human trafficking for security officials. (7)
Shelters†	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection-operated shelters for vulnerable street children in Lofa and Nimba Counties. (6,22) During the reporting period, the Government of Liberia provided additional financial resources for the establishment of a new shelter for survivors of child labor and human trafficking. (7)
U.S. Government-Funded Projects	Projects that aim to improve access to education and improve child protection. Includes the USAID School Feeding Program II and the McGovern-Dole International Food For Education and Child Nutrition Program, implemented by USDA. (22,35) In addition, the International Development Law Organization, with funding from the USDOS Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, strengthened the capacity of 170 law enforcement officers from the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency, Liberia Immigration Service, LNP, MOJ, and MOL on trafficking in persons prevention and response. (4)

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 Liberia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (36)

Although the government funds social programs, they are not sufficient to address all sectors in which child labor occurs, including in domestic work, the production of rubber and timber, and the mining of gold and diamonds. (22)

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 Liberia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2022
	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013 – 2022
Enforcement	Ensure that penalties for employing children under the minimum age for work are stringent enough to deter violations.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted in all sectors in which children work.	2016 – 2022
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for child labor violations.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate's complaint and referral mechanism is adequately supported and operational.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure adequate funding for child labor enforcement agencies, such as the Ministry of Labor, the Liberia National Police, and the Women and Children Protection Section, and provide necessary training for such officials to enforce child labor laws.	2010 – 2022
	Disaggregate the child endangerment cases prosecuted through the Ministry of Justice to determine the number of cases related to the worst forms of child labor.	2016 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure adequate funding for the National Commission on Child Labor's program activities to address child labor.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that coordinating bodies, including the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, are implementing effective case referral mechanisms.	2019 – 2022
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into relevant policies.	2010 – 2022

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Collect and publish comprehensive research data to determine child labor activities and to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Improve access to education by subsidizing school-related costs, and reduce barriers to education by building additional schools, hiring more rural teachers, providing sufficient learning materials, addressing sexual abuse in schools, and providing adequate transportation.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure that children do not leave school before the completion of compulsory education.	2017 – 2022
	Expand existing social programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, especially in forced domestic work, the production of rubber, commercial sexual exploitation, and the mining of gold and diamonds.	2009 – 2022

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