

In 2022, Namibia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In March, the government launched the Social Protection Policy to provide a framework to strengthen existing protection mechanisms, including the Child Disability Grant and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Grant, both of which provide monthly supplemental payments to children vulnerable to child labor. However, children in Namibia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in agricultural work, domestic work, and street work. Prevention and elimination of child labor are not integrated into key national policies, and social programs do not address child labor in agriculture and domestic work. The government also did not publish data on labor law or criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Namibia. 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	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		109.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)  
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2023. (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	Working on farms and gardens (3-8)
	Fishing, activities unknown (8,9)
Services	Domestic work (5,6,8-11)
	Street work, including begging and food service, including selling fruits, phone vouchers, and small goods (7,8,10-14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,8,10,11,15-17)
	Use in illicit activities, including organized begging, selling of drugs, and smuggling of fuel, diamonds, and wildlife products (8-11)
	Forced labor in agriculture, fishing, and domestic work (8,16-18)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

An extended drought and economic downturn in northern Namibia and southern Angola have likely affected children's vulnerability to child labor, including its worst forms. Children from rural areas move to urban centers, such as Windhoek, in pursuit of supplemental income for their families, and some of these children engage in selling drugs, organized begging, and commercial sexual exploitation. (3,7,8,10,12) There was a significant increase

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in the number of Angolans migrating to Namibia as a result of climate change-induced drought, which has led to emerging trends of locals hiring Angolan children as domestic workers, for street vending, and for agricultural activities. In addition, NGO and local media reporting indicates children of refugee status along the border of Namibia and Angola are increasingly recruited by criminal organizations to smuggle drugs, fuel, diamonds, and wildlife products. (8,11,18,19) The majority of child victims of trafficking in persons are recruited under the pretext that they will be given the opportunity to attend school. (20)




Children are trafficked within Namibia and from neighboring countries, such as Angola, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, for forced labor in agriculture, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation. (9,18) Commercial sexual exploitation most commonly involves girls and occurs in cities and transit corridors, especially along the Namibian and Angolan border. Both girls and boys increasingly are subjected to internet-based forms of sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography. (3,8-11,21) It is also a common practice for parents to place their children in the care of relatives and kin relations for expanded education opportunities; in some cases, these children are subjected to forced labor. (18) Children of the San and Himba ethnic groups are particularly vulnerable to forced labor on farms and in homes. (7,17,21,22) Research indicates that some child domestic workers are subjected to physical abuse by their employers. (23)

Both primary and secondary education are free by law; however, long distances to schools, particularly in rural and remote locations, may deter some children from attending school and increase their vulnerability to child labor. (24-26) In addition, educational completion is beyond the means of many families, especially in rural areas; the barriers faced by rural learners were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures. (8) The Education Act stipulates that no child be denied education due to documentation. (8,11,25) However, reporting indicates inconsistent regional enforcement of this law, and that some children from nomadic communities or migrant families have difficulty securing birth registration and other identification documents, which sometimes results in delays in enrollment and school admission. (11,27) Furthermore, children orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic or other causes sometimes become heads of households, which may require them to leave school to find work. (24) Reports also highlight that the educational needs of children with disabilities or special learning needs have not been addressed due to lack of qualified inclusive education teachers, disability-friendly infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, and assistive technologies. (8,11)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Namibia 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).

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	18	Chapter 2, Article 3(2) of the Labor Act (28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Chapter 2, Article 3(4) of the Labor Act; Article 2(2) of the Labor Act (Regulations Related to Domestic Work); Article 15(2) of the Constitution (28-30)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Chapter 2, Articles 3(3)(d) and 3(4) of the Labor Act (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Chapter 2, Article 4 of the Labor Act; Article 9 of the Constitution; Articles 202 and 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Section 15 of the Prevention of Organized Crime Act (28-31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 202 and 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act; Section 15 of the Prevention of Organized Crime Act; Chapter 2, Article 3(2) of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (30-32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 2 of the Combating of Immoral Practices Amendment Act; Section 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act (30,32)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 234 of the Child Care and Protection Act (30)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 17 of Defense Act I of 2002 (Government Notice 189 of 2010) (33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Section 234(1)(b) of the Child Care and Protection Act (30)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Section 9 of the Promulgation of Basic Education Act, 2020 (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Sections 19 and 67 of the Promulgation of Basic Education Act, 2020 (34)

\* Country has no conscription (35)

The Namibian Parliament passed an updated Promulgation of Basic Education Act in 2020, which raised the age of compulsory education up to age 18 or until the completion of secondary school. (19,34) Although Namibia's light work framework for children ages 14 to 18 has a list of activities that are not permitted—including work done underground, in construction or demolition, in places in which goods are manufactured, and in places in which electricity is generated or distributed—and prohibits night work, Namibia's light work framework is insufficient because it does not prescribe the number of hours children ages 14 to 18 may work. (28)

### 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, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC)	Enforces child labor laws and investigates allegations of violations, including forced labor; cases involving human trafficking, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Works on child labor matters with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety, and Security (MHAISS); the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication, and Social Welfare (MGEPSW); the Namibia Central Intelligence Service; and the Ministry of Education. (13,36) Refers children removed from child labor during inspections to MGEPSW for placement in social services. (37) Operates an SMS line for labor complaints, including child labor. (13)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Along with the Namibian Police Service (NAMPOL), responsible for enforcing criminal laws against forced child labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, recruitment/use of child soldiers, and/or use of children in illicit activities. MOJ coordinates enforcement efforts of criminal laws against child labor and NAMPOL is responsible for the arrest of those offending and contravening the law. (8)

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

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety, and Security (MHAISS)	Enforces criminal laws through NAMPOL. Coordinates with the labor inspectorate of MLIREC to investigate criminal labor violations, including child labor. (36,38,39) Through NAMPOL's 15 Gender-Based Violence Protection Units, collaborates with MGEPSW and MLIREC to remove children from human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, while providing medical and psychosocial care for survivors. (36)

### Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Namibia took actions to address child labor (Table 6).

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2,809,065 (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	2,582 (40)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (41)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (41)	Unknown (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (41)	Unknown (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (41)	Unknown (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (13)	Yes (13)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)

The government did not provide information about labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (8) Research suggests that while the number of labor inspectors is unknown in Namibia, the current number is likely inadequate to carry out their mandated duties. (9,42) Additionally, the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation (MLIREC) did not make public the number of child labor complaints received through their 24-hour short message service (SMS) for labor complaints in 2022. (19)

The data related to child labor are provided by the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation (MIRCO), which is the main source of information on child labor in Namibia. Government ministries and agencies, including MLIREC and the Namibian Police Service (NAMPOL), as well as NGOs can only submit data to MIRCO, which then screens, filters, packages, and submits the information to relevant stakeholders. (8) This data consolidation process presents difficulties when comparing official data to information supplied by NGOs because there is no longer a separation between the two data sets. (8)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Namibia took actions to address child labor (Table 7).

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	0 (16)	Unknown (8)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (11)	Unknown (8)

The government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. The government does not maintain centralized statistics for regional magistrate court cases, which limits information on criminal law enforcement efforts in response to the worst forms of child labor. (24) Law enforcement officials report that, as children are increasingly exposed to online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC), they face difficulties in investigating reported cases due to limited legislation, lack of training and funding, insufficient standard operating procedures related to OSEAC, and the absence of a relevant database. (43) In addition, although there are 15 Gender-Based Violence Protection Units in Namibia, previous research indicates considerable variation in the operational performance of these units. Due to resource constraints, only the Windhoek-based unit operates at full capacity, and several other units are unable to function according to their intended mandates. (9,13)

### 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 coordination across government agencies and with civil society organizations.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interministerial Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates government policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. Comprises officials from MLIREC, the Ministry of Education, MGEPEWSV, and MHAISS. (44) Research was unable to determine whether the Interministerial Committee on Child Labor was active during the reporting period. (19)

During the reporting period, there were reports of communication breakdowns between government ministries and civil society, likely minimizing the effectiveness of the ministries in addressing child trafficking and child labor. (20)

### 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 mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description & Activities
National Agenda for Children (2018–2022)	Led the strategy around child welfare issues with a focus on strengthening the protection of children in need of care, including enforcement of laws protecting children from child labor. (45) Outlined procedural instructions for each ministry and stakeholder to respond to cases of child mistreatment. (36,38,46) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Agenda for Children during the reporting period.
Social Protection Policy (2022–2030)†	Launched by MGEPEWSV during the reporting period. Aims to improve coordination of social protection mechanisms and provides a framework to strengthen child grants through the optimization of child grant-related data, reviewing and developing the implementation mechanism, and creating linkages between relevant government agencies. (47,48)
National Development Plan V (2017/2018–2021/2022)	Outlined goals for addressing child trafficking and protection concerns. (36,49) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Development Plan during the reporting period.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (50,51)

In May 2022, the Ministry of Labor and a delegation comprising its social partners participated in a conference in Durban, South Africa to contribute to a call for action to eliminate child labor in Africa. (11,22) Although the 5-year National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons for 2022–2027 was due to launch in late 2022, coordination issues at the operational level—including unclear delineation of responsibilities among the agencies involved in its development and implementation—delayed adoption. (18) Furthermore, the Ministry of

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Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare's 2019–2023 National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence does not address worst forms of child labor, such as physical abuse occurring in domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation. (51) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence during the reporting period.

## 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
Social Protection Grants†	MGEPSV-funded grants to support vulnerable children and households. (52) Includes child maintenance grants, place-of-safety allowances, and foster care grants. Child maintenance grants provide monthly stipends to single-parent families and are contingent upon school enrollment of all school-age children; place of safety and foster care grants provide support for people and places that provide temporary care for children. (53-55) During the reporting period, the government approved increases for the Child Disability Grants and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Grant, effective in 2023. (56)
Shelters and Victims Services‡	Government and NGO shelters provide safe accommodations, meals, clothing, toiletries, psychosocial support, legal assistance, medical services, and access to education. (13,44) Registered residential childcare facilities provide services for children experiencing mistreatment and neglect. The government provides subsidies, either per child or as a percentage of operating expenses, for private shelter facilities. (46,57) Research found that government shelters were not active during the reporting period. (19)
Decent Work Country Program (2018–2023)	ILO-funded program to promote decent work in Namibia, including the elimination of child labor, through employment promotion, enhanced social protection, and social dialogue and collaboration. (6,58) Prioritizes institutional capacity for implementation of child labor policies, and research and data collection on child labor and trafficking in persons. (6) Research was unable to identify activities undertaken to implement the program during the reporting period. (19)

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 Namibia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (36,59,60)

During the reporting period, the Government of Namibia established a high-level task force to operationalize goals set at the UN's Transforming Education Summit and aimed at creating inclusive, equitable, and safe schools in the country. (47)

Although the government provided assistance and services to vulnerable children and some victims of child labor, research found no evidence of programs specifically addressing children working in agriculture or domestic work. (8,20)

## 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 Namibia (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that Namibia's light work framework prescribes the number of hours children ages 14 to 18 may work.	2022
Enforcement	Publish information on criminal and labor law enforcement efforts undertaken during the reporting period, including labor inspectorate funding; number of labor inspectors; training for labor inspectors and criminal investigators; number and types of labor inspections conducted; child labor violations found; child labor-related penalties imposed and collected; number of criminal investigations; prosecutions initiated; number of convictions; and information about reciprocal referral mechanisms.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that training is provided to labor inspectors, including training of new inspectors and refresher courses.	2021 – 2022



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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that training is provided to criminal law enforcement investigators on laws related to child labor, including training for new investigators.	2018 – 2022
	Employ at least 64 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information on the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation's SMS hotline, including the number of child labor complaints reported through the mechanism.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure clear procedures at the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation for receiving, consolidating, and preparing child labor-related data submitted by stakeholders and publish data stratified by source to ensure information transparency.	2022
	Establish a mechanism to compile and publish comprehensive statistics related to labor and criminal law enforcement, including convictions for crimes related to the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that all Gender-Based Violence Protection Units have adequate resources, including consistent funding, to operate according to their intended mandates.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies are sufficiently funded and resourced in order to adequately address online sexual exploitation and abuse of children, as well as other worst forms of child labor.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the Interministerial Committee on Child Labor is funded, fully active, and able to carry out its intended mandate of coordinating policies and efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor.	2020 – 2022
	Improve ministries' effectiveness in addressing child labor by establishing a framework for communication between government ministries and civil society organizations for prompt referral of cases.	2022
Government Policies	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement policies relevant to child wellbeing, including the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, and publish results from activities implemented on an annual basis.	2016 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies as well as other worst forms of child labor into key national policies, including the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.	2019 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in all sectors it is known to occur, including fishing, to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to make education accessible and affordable for all children, particularly in rural areas; including by expanding social support to orphaned children, reducing long travel distances to schools or improve transportation to schools, increasing the number of qualified teachers, and addressing the needs of students with disabilities and special learning needs.	2019 – 2022
	Expand opportunities for birth registration and national documentation for all children, including children of nomadic and migrant communities, to improve access to education and social programs.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure activities are undertaken to implement the Decent Work Country Program and the government-run shelters for victims of exploitation and make information about implementation measures publicly available.	2021 – 2022
	Institute programs or expand existing programs to address child labor in agriculture and domestic work.	2009 – 2022

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