

In 2022, Pakistan made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Pakistan amended existing laws by increasing penalties for crimes related to child trafficking, child pornography, and employing of child domestic workers. The Punjab Labor Department also conducted over 6,000 inspections at brick kilns, identified 239 child labor violations, and arrested 60 perpetrators. Lastly, the Sindh provincial government created a task force to review child labor laws and recommend amendments to fill gaps in current provincial legislation. However, children in Pakistan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in domestic work, brick manufacturing, and agriculture. Pakistan's provincial labor inspectorates do not have sufficient human and financial resources, and enforcement data are unavailable. Furthermore, police corruption, particularly the taking of bribes from suspected perpetrators to ignore child labor crimes and a lack of willingness to conduct criminal investigations, hindered Pakistan's ability to address child labor throughout the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Pakistan.

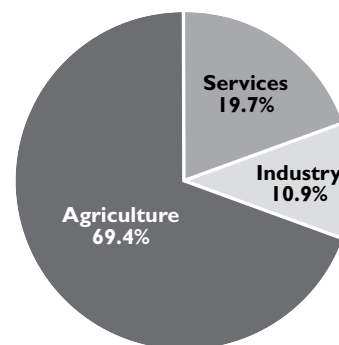
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	9.8 (2,261,704)
Attending School (%)	10 to 14	78.0
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	0.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		72.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2017–2018 and from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5, 2014. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14



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	Farming, including harvesting cotton, sugarcane, and wheat (3-6)
	Fishing, including deep sea fishing† (6)
	Poultry farming (7)
Industry	Manufacturing glass bangles,† surgical instruments,† and jewelry (3,8,9)
	Weaving carpets,† producing garments, and tanning leather† (8,10-13)
	Producing bricks (8,10-13)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Mining coal† and gemstones, and crushing stone† (10,14,15)
	Construction (7)
Services	Domestic work (13,16,17)
	Working in hotels, restaurants, gas stations, automobile repair, and shoe shining (10,12,13,18)
	Scavenging† and sorting garbage and recyclables, begging, and street vending (12,18,19)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in agriculture, brickmaking, carpet weaving, small shops, and coal mining (5,13,20)
	Forced domestic work (5,13,21)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,13,20,22)
	Forced begging (5,13)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (5,13)
	Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking and production of drugs (12,13,23)

† 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.

Child laborers in Pakistan are sometimes subjected to sexual abuse at their places of employment, including in factories and workshops, or while scavenging on the streets. (13,18) They are also sometimes subjected to sexual exploitation to obtain or keep their jobs. (5) Moreover, one in every four households in Pakistan employs children as child domestic workers who sometimes work under conditions of forced labor, experiencing debt bondage, sexual assault, and physical abuse. (5,13,16,17) Since the 2022 floods, more children have entered domestic servitude to repay loans their parents have taken from landlords. (13) Furthermore, reports estimate that around 70 percent of bonded laborers in Pakistan are children, and they make up one-third of the 4 million people working in brick kilns, some working alongside other family members. (13,24) In Sindh Province, almost 700,000 children in the agricultural sector work as bonded laborers. (13)




Some children from Pakistan are kidnapped or sold into organized begging rings, domestic servitude, gangs, and child sex trafficking in Iran. (5,13,25) Organized criminal groups also reportedly force Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani children, particularly from Dalbadin and Quetta in Balochistan, into drug trafficking. (5,20,25) In addition, children are used in drug smuggling operations along the Afghan border with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (13,19,26) Moreover, non-state armed militant groups reportedly kidnap children as young as age 12, coerce parents with threats, and recruit children forcibly from *madrassas*—Islamic religious schools that provide free education and meals to Pakistan’s poorest children—to spy, fight, and carry out suicide attacks. (26) Sexual abuse of children in *madrassas* is also of significant concern. (27,28)

Children in Pakistan face several barriers to education. (13,29) As of 2022, an estimated 22.8 million children in Pakistan were out of school. (13) Insufficient internet coverage in many rural areas, especially in the newly merged tribal districts of the former federally administered tribal areas and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, has hampered children’s access to meaningful learning. (13,29) Many other children face barriers to accessing education, including high rates of teacher absenteeism, inadequate facilities, lack of transportation, school fees, corporal punishment, and child sex abuse, all of which may deter children from attending school. (13,30,31) The 2022 floods further affected children’s access to schools, particularly in the rural areas, where 27,000 schools were severely damaged. (13) Schools in Pakistan may also be vulnerable to attacks by armed groups, disrupting children’s learning. (8,19,20,25,30,32)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Pakistan 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	✓

In November 2022, Pakistan ratified the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. (33,34)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Pakistan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of a minimum age for hazardous work protections that extend to all children at the federal level and in some provinces.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Section 50 of the Factories Act; Sections 2, 20, and 27 of the West Pakistan Shops and Establishments Ordinance; Sections 2 and 26 of the Mines Act; Sections 3 and 11 of the Road Transport Workers Ordinance; Sections 2, 3, 7, and 14 of the Pakistan Employment of Children Act (35-39)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	14	Sections 2 and 3 of the Employment of Children Act (39)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Parts 1 and 2 of the Schedule of the Employment of Children Act (39)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2, 3 and 7 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Section 4 of the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act; Sections 367, 370, 371A, 371B, and 374 of the Penal Code (40-42)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 2, 3, 4, and 7 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 366A, 366B, 370, and 371 of the Penal Code; Sections 2 and 3 of the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance (41-43)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 292, 366A, 366B, 371A, 371B, and 377A-B of the Penal Code; Sections 2, 3, and 7 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (41,42,44)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A		
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section 3 of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (45)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 3 of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (45)

* Country has no conscription (46)

† The minimum age for work in shops and establishments is 14 years old. The minimum age for work in factories and mines is 15 years old. (35-37)

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The Eighteenth Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution permits provinces to pass laws that govern labor law and children's welfare. (47,48) Federal law applies only until the province passes a law on the same subject. (47) During the reporting period, the Senate enacted the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (Amendment) Act of 2021, which allows appropriate government ministries to approve policies related to child rights issues without seeking approval from the cabinet, allowing for the issuance of policies in a timely manner. (49) In October 2022, the government also enacted the Islamabad Domestic Workers Act (2022), which applies to the Islamabad Capital Territory and prohibits the employment of children under 16 to work in a household, prescribes imprisonment of up to 1 month for employing children under the age of 12 and a fine of up to \$175 (PKR 50,000) for employing a child under the age of 16, and provides other protections, including minimum wage provisions, restrictions on working hours, and regular time off. (13) In addition, the government amended colonial-era law by enacting the Children (Pledging of Labor) (Amendment) Act of 2022, which applies to the Islamabad Capital Territory and provides punishment for parents or guardians pledging the labor of their child to potential employers. (13)

Some of Pakistan's federal and provincial laws are not in compliance with international standards on child labor. The federal minimum age for work provisions and the minimum age for work laws in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh Provinces do not extend to informal employment, such as domestic work. (35,38,50-53) In addition, as the hazardous work age at the federal level and in Balochistan is less than age 18, it does not meet international standards. (39,54) While the federal government and the four provinces have identified hazardous occupations and activities for children, hazardous work prohibitions do not cover brickmaking, for which there is evidence that children are exposed to environmental health hazards. (10,55) Additionally, hazardous work prohibitions for the federal and provincial governments do not cover child domestic work, for which there is evidence that children are exposed to physical abuse. (19,56) Punjab limits domestic work for children ages 15 to 18 to part-time work that is not likely to harm the health, safety, and education of a domestic worker, but does not prevent children under 18 from engaging in this work. (51) Although laws in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh Provinces prohibit children under age 18 from working in underground mines or above-ground quarries, federal law—which also still applies in Balochistan—does not prohibit children ages 15 to 18 from working in mines, and there is evidence that children in Balochistan are engaged in coal mining, which involves exposure to hazardous substances, work underground, and lethal accidents. (37,47,50,52-54,57,58) Research was unable to identify a law explicitly establishing a minimum age for voluntary military recruitment.

Federal and provincial laws related to forced labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation meet international standards. However, federal and provincial laws in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa do not prohibit the use of children in drug production and drug trafficking. (53,59,60) The federal and provincial governments in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have not enacted laws that prohibit the recruitment and use of children by non-state groups in armed conflict. (52,59) Moreover, as the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (45,52,61-63)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations (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
Provincial and Regional Labor and Criminal Law Enforcement Agencies	Pakistan's provinces are responsible for enforcing labor laws, including those relevant to child labor. Provincial labor inspectors inspect industrial areas and markets to identify child labor violations, pursue legal action against employers, and collect enforcement data at the district level. (64) Refer children taken into custody to Child Protection Officers. (65,66) Provincial labor courts assess penalties for labor violations and are located in each province and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). In addition, provincial and regional police enforce violations of federal and provincial laws concerning the worst forms of child labor, including the Pakistan Penal Code, the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, and the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act. (20,25,67,68)
Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Anti-Trafficking Unit	Enforces transnational human trafficking-related laws, particularly the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act. Cooperates with other governments on human trafficking cases, operates a hotline for survivors, and publishes information on anti-trafficking efforts on its website. (5,20,22,30) The Ministry of Interior and FIA, along with other civil society groups, published the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling 2021–2025. (5)
District Vigilance Committees (DVCs)	Assist in rehabilitating bonded laborers according to the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act. Consist of members of the public, civil society groups, lawyers, members of the media, and local government officials and report to the District Magistrate. (25,40,69) Exist in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the ICT, but not in Balochistan Province. (25) DVCs were functioning in all of Punjab Province's 36 districts and established in 14 districts in Sindh Province. However, Sindh DVCs were nonfunctional during the reporting period. (19,49,70) The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government issued orders to establish DVCs in all of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's districts in 2021; however, reports indicate there was only one DVC established and functioning in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province during the reporting period. (71)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Pakistan took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the provincial labor departments that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of human and financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (39)	Yes (39)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (19)	Yes (13)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (35)	Yes (35)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (19)	Yes (13)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)

Pakistan's provinces are responsible for enforcing labor laws and collecting data on labor law enforcement efforts at the district level. However, there is neither a centralized federal repository for enforcement data nor any mechanism for reporting this information; therefore, limited labor inspection data were available for inclusion in this report. (13) Although provincial labor departments reportedly conducted routine inspections, it is unknown whether inspections were targeted in high-risk sectors. (13) Likewise, provincial labor departments permit unannounced inspections, but it is unknown whether unannounced inspections were conducted. Moreover, factory owners in the Sindh province often deny inspectors access to their facilities, and inspections are often announced in advance. (13) Some garment factories reportedly paid bribes to provincial labor officers to avoid

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inspections, and some factories prevented officials from conducting inspections. (5) However, research indicates that the Punjab Labor Department conducted 53,058 child labor inspections and reported 1,110 violations, resulting in 1,101 police reports that help initiate investigations. The Punjab Labor Department also conducted 6,983 inspections at brick kilns and found 239 child labor violations, making 60 arrests. (13) In addition, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region has eight child protection courts, but as of the end of 2022, these courts had not adjudicated any child labor cases. (13)

The ILO and NGOs report the number of labor inspectors and inspections in Pakistan is insufficient given the size and population of the country. (13,72) Sources also indicate that provincial labor departments lack funding for travel outside of major cities to conduct inspections and some labor inspectors use their personal resources to carry out inspections. (13) In addition, training provided to law enforcement officials during the reporting period was insufficient, and it is unknown whether a reciprocal mechanism exists between law enforcement and social services. (10,13)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Pakistan 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 reports of corruption and indifference to worst forms of child labor crimes on the part of investigative officials.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (19)	Yes (13)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (19)	Unknown (13)

The government did not publish data on efforts to enforce criminal laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor, including data on the investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, or convictions achieved for inclusion in this report. (3,13) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa did enact the Child Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Act, 2022, which provides sufficiently stringent punishment for perpetrators of child sexual abuse, child pornography, child trafficking, and other offenses related to child rights. (13) However, reports indicate that progress toward the implementation and enforcement of the law has been slow. (13) During the reporting period, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)'s Cyber Crime Wing made two arrests related to child pornography that were widely covered in national media. (13,73,74) FIA also conducted trainings on anti-human trafficking standard operating procedures in the capital and in provincial social welfare departments, labor departments, and child protection bureaus in 2022. In addition, FIA worked with the IOM to provide trainings on identifying, screening, and referring survivors of human trafficking and child labor. (13) However, training is inconsistent across Pakistan and omits information on child labor, child trafficking, and sexual exploitation of children. (13)

Police corruption—particularly taking bribes from suspected perpetrators to ignore alleged crimes or refusing to open investigations without bribes—continued to hamper Pakistan's ability to address child sex trafficking and child labor. (5,7) Reports indicated that police sometimes refused to file cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, unless the victims paid a bribe. (5,15,19,24) Moreover, the government did not act against reports of official complicity with human trafficking crimes. (5,26) Furthermore, research identified a lack of consistent law enforcement efforts against those who exploit street children, including for forced labor and sex trafficking, and traffickers operate openly and with impunity. (5,20,25)

A majority of the estimated 18,000 brick kilns in Pakistan operates without registration or providing required benefits for workers, particularly those ages 14 to 18. (69,75) Survivors of bonded labor settled for financial compensation rather than criminal prosecution because guidance to pursue a formal criminal case is lacking. (5) Furthermore, some police and other local officials colluded with farm and brick kiln owners to create fake criminal cases against individuals who attempted to escape situations of bonded labor. (7) Research has also found that though the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act mandated the creation of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) in each province to report and file cases, bonded labor survivors had to leave their landowners and file their own cases in court without DVC support. (5) In addition, in some situations in which bonded labor survivors filed cases, the courts either did not pursue prosecutions or notified the survivors' employers of the case. As a result, human trafficking survivors who came forward often faced retaliation from their exploitative employers. (5)

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 inadequate funding and human resources at the provincial level for child protection units.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Coordination Bodies	<p>Provincial Child Protection Units (CPUs) coordinate and initiate interventions against child labor at the provincial level. (76) Take into custody at-risk children, including those rescued from exploitative labor situations, and provide case management services. (76) Present cases of children to the Child Protection Court or other appropriate authorities. (76) Each CPU is led by a Child Protection Officer supported by social workers and psychologists and operates under the District Administrator. (25) As of 2022, there were 14 CPUs to support children in Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with additional CPUs in Punjab. (77,78) Despite passing legislation in 2016, Balochistan only has 1 CPU in Quetta with 33 CPUs yet to be established. (49) CPUs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained unstaffed and non-functioning due to the COVID-19 pandemic and funding delays; the Chief Child Protection Officer position has remained vacant for 5 years. (13) In addition to CPUs, Pakistan has several provincial child protection commissions, bureaus, and authorities in each province with different mandates related to coordinating efforts to enhance safety and rights of children in Pakistan. (13,60,79) For example, during the reporting period, the Punjab Child Protection and Welfare Bureau rescued 9,673 children and provided shelter or reunited them with their families, as well as took custody of over 1,000 children. The bureau also organized awareness programs in schools, colleges, and universities, and held a training program for the Rawalpindi police. (13) In December 2022, the bureau organized a provincial conference on child protection in Lahore. (13) Similarly, the Sindh Child Protection Authority has been active in preventing underage marriages throughout the province. The Sindh helpline 1121 has been used to track and respond to complaints about child beggary and corporal punishment at the provincial level. (80) The Sindh government created a Child Protection Task Force, which will review all laws related to child protection and recommend amendments in 2023 to fill in gaps in existing legislation. However, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Commission did not hold its required quarterly meetings during the reporting period. (13)</p>

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 lack of implementation of key national policies.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Labor Policy	Seeks to gradually eradicate child labor, collect child labor statistics, enforce the compulsory education law, assist children through referral mechanisms, educate families and key stakeholders about the negative effects of child labor, and collaborate with organizations to research and develop solutions to eliminate child labor. (81) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Labor Policy during the reporting period.
Punjab Labor Policy	Seeks to improve working conditions, eradicate child and bonded labor, and establish social safety for workers and their families. Includes the goal of ending all child labor in brick kilns, in addition to the construction of schools, hospitals, and residences for workers. (82) Consists of independent working and monitoring groups that include members of government, police, and civil society and are responsible for carrying out inspections, victim identification, and treatment of survivors under the guidance of this policy. (80) In 2022, the Punjab Labor Department conducted a series of special campaigns to raise awareness among workers and employers on their rights and obligations under the policy. (13) The Punjab Bureau of Statistics released results from a child labor survey on October 18, 2022, and reported child labor prevalence in the province at 13.4 percent. (6)
Sindh Labor Policy	Seeks to protect vulnerable workers, including children. Includes goals to enforce laws dealing with hazardous child labor, extend the minimum age for employment in domestic and home-based work, ensure minimum wages for working children, and increase access to education and training. (83) In 2021, the last date for which information is available, the Sindh Province Labor Department was undertaking a child labor survey to determine the prevalence of child labor in the province. (80) Research was unable to determine whether the survey was completed or if other activities were undertaken to implement the Sindh Labor Policy during the reporting period.

In 2022, the National Commission on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF issued a policy brief on child labor. (13) The brief examined the prevailing laws and enforcement mechanisms related to child domestic workers and street children and made recommendations to legislators, policy makers, and government agencies on how to address the prevalence of child domestic workers in Pakistan. (84,85) However, although both the federal and provincial governments have education policies and sector plans, which recognize the role of child labor in limiting student enrollment in schools, they do not offer child labor elimination and prevention strategies. (80)

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
Bait-ul-Mal Programs†	Government-funded programs that aim to remove children from child labor, including its worst forms, and to increase vulnerable children's access to education. Programs include the National Centers for Rehabilitation of Child Labor and the Child Support Program. (86,87) As of 2022, there were 159 Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal School for Rehabilitation of Child Labor centers in Pakistan, and around 17,000 students are enrolled in primary education. (88) The program also launched a new initiative to provide social protection and education to orphan girls, including cash transfers in the amount of \$21 to \$42 (PKR 6000 to 12000) to each family based on the number of orphan girls they foster. (89)
Hotlines and Institutes†	The Ministry of Human Rights (MHR) operates a helpline for reporting human rights violations, including child labor violations, and for providing referrals to legal aid and a network of NGOs to survivors of human rights abuses. (7,90) FIA also operates a 24/7 hotline to address human trafficking, including child trafficking, in Pakistan at the headquarters, ICT, and district levels. (22,90) In 2022, Child Protection and Welfare Bureau helpline received 2,626 calls which led to the rescue of over 1,000 children. (13) In 2021, MHR launched the Zainab app, which is integrated with the district police stations across the country and helps track and trace missing children as well as streamline efforts to address child abuse cases, including child labor cases in Pakistan. (91) Since its launch, the app has received 1,803 cases, with 710 cases being recorded in 2022. (13) However, reports indicate that the collection of provincial information for the app is decentralized, and the quality can vary from province to province. (13) During the reporting period, MHR helped establish a Child Protection Institute (CPI) in ICT under the Islamabad Territory Child Protection Act 2018 to provide services to at-risk and vulnerable children. The program will provide rehabilitation, rescue, shelter, counseling, and help with family tracing services for children who are survivors of trafficking and forced labor. (19,92) By the end of the reporting period, CPIs were functional in nine cities in Punjab, including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Multan, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yak Khan, and Sahiwal. In 2022, Punjab created two CPIs in Mandi Bahauaddin and Lodhran that registered abandoned children in the national database. (13)

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 Pakistan.

The government allocated \$5.2 million for provincial child labor surveys. Gilgit-Balistan published its survey online and Punjab completed its survey, publication pending. (13,100) The Gilgit-Balistan child labor survey shows that the average prevalence of child labor is around 13.1 percent, reaching 28 percent in some parts of the province. (101) The report also recommends the development of programs focusing on education, social protection, and laws to address child labor. (102) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh survey results are expected in 2023. (3,13)

Pakistan's social programs are insufficient to address the prevalence and scope of the country's child labor problem. In particular, existing programs do not provide sufficient protection and rehabilitation services for bonded child laborers and child survivors of human trafficking. (13,103) Government initiatives are also insufficient for children working in the informal sector, including for domestic workers. (19) In addition, there are no significant social programs to address sexual abuse of child workers or children attending *madrassas* in Pakistan. (80)

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 Pakistan (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Extend minimum age protections to all sectors and informal employment at the federal level as well as in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh Provinces.	2011 – 2022
	Prohibit the employment of children under age 18 in hazardous work, such as brickmaking, mining, and domestic work, at the federal level and in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh Provinces.	2009 – 2022
	Prohibit the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs, at the federal level and in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces.	2011 – 2022
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment and use of children under age 18 by non-state groups, including at the federal level and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.	2015 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law establishes a minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military in accordance with international standards.	2022
Enforcement	Ensure there are at least 4,388 labor inspectors to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 65.8 million people.	2016 – 2022
	Establish District Vigilance Committees in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces, and ensure that these committees are able to conduct public outreach and report and file cases.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that provincial labor inspectorates have enough financial and human resources to conduct inspections, including funding for travel outside of major cities.	2022
	Create a centralized repository for enforcement data and a regular mechanism for reporting enforcement information.	2018 – 2022
	Publish labor law enforcement information, including funding for provincial labor inspectorates, number of labor inspectors and whether they received training, whether reciprocal referral mechanisms exist between labor authorities and social services for all provinces, and the number of labor inspections conducted, child labor law violations found, and whether penalties were imposed and collected, routine inspections were targeted, and the number of unannounced inspections conducted.	2010 – 2022
	Establish a referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services in all provinces.	2017 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors receive regular training on child labor issues, including its worst forms.	2022
	Conduct unannounced inspections and hold accountable individuals preventing labor inspectors from accessing worksites.	2022
	Publish information about criminal law investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, convictions achieved, and sentences imposed, as well as training provided for criminal investigators.	2016 – 2022
	Establish sufficient laws to end police corruption, particularly the taking of bribes to create criminal cases against released bonded laborers, and from suspected perpetrators to ignore alleged human trafficking crimes.	2019 – 2022

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies have enough human and financial resources to carry out investigations and prosecute perpetrators.	2022
	Prosecute and penalize employers who employ bonded laborers and ensure bonded labor survivors are protected from future retaliations for bringing their cases to court.	2020 – 2022
Coordination	Establish an adequate number of Child Protection Units in all provinces and ensure that they receive sufficient human and financial resources in a timely manner.	2017 - 2022
Government Policies	Publish information on the activities undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh Labor Policy.	2020 – 2022
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into education policies and sector plans of provincial governments.	2014 – 2022
Social Programs	Establish programs that ensure that children are protected from sexual abuse in schools, including <i>madrassas</i> , and in workplaces, and while scavenging on the streets.	2021 – 2022
	Complete and publish child labor surveys at the federal and provincial levels.	2009 – 2022
	Improve existing programs to address the prevalence and scope of Pakistan's child labor problem, including providing enough protection and rehabilitation services for child domestic workers, bonded child laborers, child survivors of human trafficking, and other children working in the informal sector and in the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure all children have access to free and compulsory education, as required by law, by implementing programs to address high rates of teacher absenteeism, inadequate facilities, school fees, lack of transportation, internet access in rural areas—especially in the former federally administered tribal areas and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province—and use of corporal punishment.	2022

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