

In 2022, Papua New Guinea made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government reintroduced the Government Tuition Fee Subsidy Policy, which pledges to cover 100 percent of school fees for students. However, children in Papua New Guinea are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining and deep-sea fishing. Papua New Guinea's hazardous work prohibitions do not comply with international standards because they allow children ages 16 and older to engage in hazardous work, which is below the international standard of 18 years old. Papua New Guinea also does not have laws that sufficiently protect children from commercial sexual exploitation because using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. Papua New Guinea also does not have sufficient prohibitions against child trafficking because the law requires that threats, the use of force, or coercion be established for the crime of child trafficking. Moreover, although exact funding levels are unknown, the labor inspectorate does not have sufficient resources to adequately enforce Papua New Guinea's labor laws, including sufficient trainings for labor inspectors.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Papua New Guinea. 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 (%)		77.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, 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 in agriculture, including on coffee, tea, copra, and palm oil plantations (3,4)
	Deep-sea fishing (5)
	Herding of livestock (5)
Industry	Work in manufacturing (4)
	Mining and quarrying, including gold mining (4)
Services	Manual labor (6)
	Domestic work (4)
	Street work, including begging (4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (6)
	Forced labor in domestic work, portering, and begging (6)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (4)
	Forced mining, including panning for gold (6)

‡ 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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Papua New Guinea is a source and destination country for child trafficking, especially of girls. Children exploited for sex trafficking or engaged in street work, such as begging or vending, are vulnerable to crime, traffic accidents, hunger, punishment from relatives, and illness. (4,6) Additionally, children are subjected to forced labor in industries such as mining, portering, and forced domestic work to pay off family debts. (6) Dangerous tasks in the mining industry, such as handling chemicals like mercury used in gold mining, are often performed without appropriate training and equipment. Similarly, in the agriculture sector, children are put at risk of drowning while deep-sea diving for sea cucumbers and pearls. (4)

During the reporting period, the Government of Papua New Guinea reinstated the Government Tuition Fee Subsidy Policy for students from age 6 through age 18. The policy pledges to cover 100 percent of school fees and the government has allocated a budget of more than \$176 million (623 million Papua New Guinea kina) to support the policy. (4,7,8) However, schools are still allowed to collect project fees from parents. (7) Additionally, a lack of essential resources, such as classrooms and textbooks, and limited transportation remain a barrier to accessible education. (4,7) Some of the most pressing barriers to education include unpaid teachers, a lack of transportation, aging infrastructure, and a lack of reliable water supplies and sanitation facilities, all of which are exacerbated by the government frequently failing in its obligation to provide schools with sufficient funding. (4) In previous years, some schools did not receive a subsidy and subsequently closed due to aging infrastructure. (4,9) Schools also face disruptions due to natural disasters because almost 80 percent of schools lack electricity, limiting remote and online-based learning opportunities. (10,11) In addition, research found that the threat of gender-based violence prevents many girls from attending school. (12) Papua New Guinea lacks comprehensive research and data on child labor, which affects the government's ability to address child labor in the country. (4)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Papua New Guinea has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Papua New Guinea's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 103 of the Employment Act (13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	16	Article 104 of the Employment Act (13)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 23 and 43 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea; Section 208 of the Criminal Code (14,15)

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Section 208 of the Criminal Code (15)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 229J–229O, 229R, and 229S of the Criminal Code (16)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Section 30 of the Defense Act (17)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

\* Country has no conscription (18)

Papua New Guinea's existing legal framework governing child labor does not meet international standards in a number of areas. Although Papua New Guinea meets international standards for the minimum age for work, Article 103 of the Papua New Guinea Employment Act permits children ages 11 through 16 to work under certain conditions, including with parental consent and if the child works only with members of the family. (13,19) Children as young as age 11 are permitted to perform light work, without enumerating what forms of labor may be classified as “light work” and without establishing a limit on the number of hours a child under age 16 may be made to work. (13,19) Papua New Guinea's existing law on the minimum age for hazardous work under Article 104 of Papua New Guinea's Employment Act sets the minimum age for engaging in hazardous labor activities at age 16 rather than age 18. Additionally, the law does not list hazardous occupations that are prohibited for children. (13,19) The National Education Plan does not include an age up to which education is compulsory. (8) However, although the Government Tuition Fee Subsidy Policy was reinstated in 2022, the policy allows schools to charge project fees. (7)

Papua New Guinea also does not have laws that prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. (20) The law does not sufficiently protect children from commercial sexual exploitation because using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. (16) Lastly, the prohibitions against child trafficking are insufficient because they require that threats, the use of force, or coercion be established for the crime of child trafficking. (15,21)

### 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
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations	Directly employs all labor inspectors in the country and identifies hazards that child workers are exposed to in various sectors. (4)
Department of Youth, Religion, and Community Development	Through the Office of Child and Family Welfare Services, implements, oversees, and enforces the Child Protection ( <i>Lukautim Pikinini</i> ) Act, including provisions on child labor and its worst forms, and has conducted trainings for Papua New Guinea's Child Protection Officers. (10,22,23)
Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary	Enforces laws against commercial sexual exploitation of children. (10,24) Includes the specialized Family and Sexual Violence Unit, which protects children's rights and safety. (24)

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### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of a reciprocal referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services.

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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (13)	Yes (4,13)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (13)	Yes (13)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Unknown (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (10)	Unknown (4)

The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations lacks a data monitoring system to track child labor cases, which may hamper its efforts to address child labor concerns in Papua New Guinea. (10) Research was unable to determine whether there is a referral mechanism for survivors of child labor and exploitation. The Department of Youth, Religion, and Community Development has not yet implemented a system to refer children for protection and shelter. (4) The Department does conduct some trainings for Child Protection Officers who provide referrals for children and families. However, the scope of the training is unknown. (4)

The Government of Papua New Guinea did not respond to requests for information related to its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (4) Research indicates that Papua New Guinea does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (4,25) Due to limited personnel capacity, labor inspectors generally respond to specific child labor violations on a case-by-case basis as complaints are filed. The labor inspectorate does not have sufficient resources to adequately enforce Papua New Guinea's labor laws, including sufficient trainings for labor officers. (4) Due to this lack of resources, the ability to conduct inspections outside of major urban centers, where most child labor occurs, is limited. When labor inspections do occur, they are conducted in all three of Papua New Guinea's major business languages (English, Hiri-Motu, and Pidgin/Tok Pisin). (4)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea 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 (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (10)	Unknown (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (10)	Unknown (4)

The Government of Papua New Guinea did not respond to requests for information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (4) Although specific funding allocations are unknown, research indicates that there are generally not enough officers to conduct criminal investigations into child labor accusations due to a lack of funding, training, and report writing skills. (4) Research was unable to find evidence of trainings occurring in 2022 and was unable to determine whether training for prospective law enforcement officials addresses all child labor elimination components, including recognizing the worst forms of child labor, victim identification, and prevention strategies. (4) Additionally, poor prosecutorial efforts including a widespread observance of customary justice practices have resulted in a distrust of law enforcement among survivors of human trafficking. Furthermore, political will among law enforcement is lacking, stemming from insufficient funds to conduct investigations, particularly in rural areas. (6)

#### 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 the lack of a mechanism to address all worst forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee (NAHTC)	Coordinates efforts to address human trafficking. NAHTC met once in March 2022 but continued to lack sufficient resources and commitment from the government. (6) In addition, as in previous years, NAHTC failed to appoint specific committee members to represent relevant agencies and effectively excluded non-governmental stakeholders. Moreover, some key interagency stakeholders and senior government officials were unaware of the Committee's existence. (6)

Although Papua New Guinea has the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee to coordinate efforts to address human trafficking, it does not have a coordinating mechanism to address other forms of child labor.

#### 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 of key national policies. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor in Papua New Guinea during the reporting period.

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

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea	Promotes government coordination efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through more effective prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures and capacity building. (3)
National Child Protection Policy (2017–2027)	Seeks to strengthen child protection laws, including increased data gathering and analysis, full implementation of the <i>Lukautim Pikinini Act</i> , and elimination of violence against children at the hands of the police. (29)

#### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address the full scope of the problem.

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**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description & Activities
Child Care Centers†	Provide a safe location for children removed by Child Protection Officers from situations deemed to be harmful to their health and safety. (4,23) Research was unable to determine whether the Child Care Centers were active during the reporting period.
<i>I-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain</i>	Telephone hotline managed by ChildFund Papua New Guinea to report child welfare concerns and physical or sexual violence. The hotline was active in 2022, and staff received training from IOM staff on international legal frameworks on trafficking in persons, crisis intervention, and referrals during the reporting period. (30)

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 Papua New Guinea.

Research was unable to determine whether the government carried out programs specifically designed to assist children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, or mining. Research found no evidence of any programs with the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4,31)

## 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 Papua New Guinea (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 Armed Conflict.	2018 – 2022
	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2014 – 2022
	Accede to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for light work from age 11 to age 13 to comply with international standards and ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Raise and establish the minimum age for hazardous work from age 16 to age 18 and identify hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that the law does not require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances.	2016 – 2022
	Establish a law that criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2022
	Establish a law that criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law an age up to which education is compulsory that extends to age 16, the minimum age for employment.	2009 – 2022
Enforcement	Establish by law free basic public education, including fully funding education-related fees.	2021 – 2022
	Publish information on child labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, the number of labor inspectors, whether training was provided for labor inspectors, and the number of inspections conducted at worksites.	2014 – 2022
	Publish information regarding the number of child labor violations found, the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed, and the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2022
	Publish information regarding whether routine inspections were conducted and targeted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2022
	Publish information regarding whether a mechanism for child labor complaints exists.	2022
	Publish information regarding the existence of a reciprocal referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services.	2022
	Establish a data monitoring system to track child labor cases.	2019 – 2022
	Establish a referral mechanism between labor and criminal law enforcement authorities and social services agencies to ensure that victims of child labor receive appropriate support services.	2014 – 2022
Employ at least 209 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 3.1 million people.	2017 – 2022	

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen the inspection system by ensuring that inspectors conduct routine and targeted inspections in addition to those that are complaint driven.	2014 – 2022
	Provide inspectors with the resources necessary to conduct inspections and enforce laws that protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including funding, training, and report writing skills.	2009 – 2022
	Institutionalize and fully fund training on the worst forms of child labor for labor inspectors and criminal investigators, including training for new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspections occur in all areas of Papua New Guinea, especially outside of urban areas.	2019 – 2022
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of child labor investigations initiated, the number of child labor penalties imposed, and the number of criminal law enforcement convictions secured.	2017 – 2022
	Standardize prosecutorial and law enforcement practices to increase trust amongst survivor communities and the general public.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee is active and meets regularly to implement measures to address human trafficking; there is senior governmental leadership and participation at meetings; and all anti-human trafficking stakeholders, including NGOs, are invited to and participate in National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee coordination, per the Committee's mandate.	2021 – 2022
	Establish a coordinating mechanism to prevent and eliminate all worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that all policies are funded and implemented according to their mandate, including the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea and the National Child Protection Policy.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Increase access to education by eliminating all school-related fees; increase funding for school infrastructure improvements, including essentials such as textbooks, electricity, and technology; ensure that teacher salaries are paid; address transportation challenges for students; institute programs to address gender-based violence against girls in schools; and ensure that all schools have reliable water supplies.	2014 – 2022
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Implement and fully fund programs and services that assist children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in all relevant sectors, especially commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and mining.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that Child Care Centers are active, fully funded, and publish their activities undertaken during the reporting period.	2019 – 2022

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