

In 2022, Samoa made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In partnership with the International Labor Organization, the government conducted a Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Vendors, finding a 27 percent increase compared to the same study conducted in 2015. It also provided information on its labor law and criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of labor inspectors, for the first time for inclusion in this report. However, although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Samoa are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in street work, including begging and vending. Samoa lacks laws that prohibit using, procuring, or offering children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. Furthermore, as the minimum age for work of 15 is lower than the compulsory education age of 16, children in Samoa may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Samoa. 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	22.1 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	89.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	30.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		114.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 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	Farming and animal husbandry (3,4)
Services	Domestic work (3,5)
	Street work, including begging, vending, and selling food, toiletries, garlands, and other products (3-9)
	Garbage scavenging (3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Use in illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of drugs (3)

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







In partnership with the ILO, the government conducted a Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Vendors, finding a 27 percent increase compared to the same study conducted in 2015. (4) The 2015 study found 106 children working as vendors in the streets in Samoa, while the 2022 study found a total of 135 child street vendors. (3,10) Children who participate in street vending may work long hours, work late at night, be exposed to exhaust fumes, and have an increased risk of being hit by passing traffic. (3,11,12)

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II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Samoa 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). However, gaps exist in Samoa's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a failure to criminalize the use of children in illicit activities.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 51 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act (13)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 51 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act (13)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 51 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act; Article 21 of the Labor and Employment Relations Regulations; Government of Samoa Public Notice on Hazardous Work for Children (13-15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 8 of the Constitution; Articles 2 and 18 of the Labor and Employment Relations Act; Section 157 of the Crimes Act (13, 16, 17)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 155–157 of the Crimes Act (17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 73, 74, 82, and 157 of the Crimes Act (17)
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		Article 8 of the International Criminal Court Act (18)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 2 (Section 2) of the Education Amendment Act (19)
Free Public Education	No		

† Country has no standing military (18)

The Labor and Employment Relations Regulations permit children between ages 12 and 14 to engage in light work for a limited number of hours; however, they neither specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken nor define the activities that are permitted. The types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover street work, including begging and vending. (7, 13-15) 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. The Education Amendment Act 2019 raised the compulsory education age to 16. (13) In addition, there is no free basic education for children in Samoa as established by law, increasing the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (19, 20)

Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient because, while they do criminalize forced labor, they do not also criminalize slavery and practices similar to slavery or debt bondage. (13,16,17) Samoa does not meet the international standard for the prohibition of child commercial sexual exploitation because the Government of Samoa's Crimes Act does not protect children ages 16 to 18. (7,17) Research found no evidence of laws that ban using, procuring, or offering of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. (12,21) Samoa also does not meet the international standard for prohibiting non-state military recruitment because its International Criminal Court Act does not apply to children ages 15 to 18. (18)

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).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Labor (MCIL)	Enforces the Labor and Employment Relations Act, which includes investigating complaints of child labor law violations. (22,23) Refers cases to the Ministry of Police and the Office of the Attorney General for enforcement. (23)
Ministry of Police, Prisons, and Corrections Services	Enforces criminal laws related to child labor. (11,23)
Office of the Attorney General	Prosecutes criminal cases of the worst forms of child labor. (23)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Samoa appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (11)	\$47,514 (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (11)	4 (4)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (13,14)	Yes (13,14)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (11,24)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (11)	116 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (11)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (11)	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (11)	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (11)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (14)	No (14)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	N/A (11)	N/A (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (11)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (4)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, the government's criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function adequately in addressing child labor (Table 7).

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (24)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (11)	0 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (11)	0 (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (11)	N/A
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (11)	N/A
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown (11)	Yes (4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Child Labor Taskforce	Comprises MCIL; Ministry of Police, Prisons, and Corrections; Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development (MWCSO); and Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture. Aims to reduce the prevalence of child vendors in towns and cities through patrol sweeps and conducting outreach activities. (23) Formerly the Child Vending Task Force. (23) During the reporting period, the Child Labor Taskforce held three meetings focused on the 2022 Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Vendors. (4)

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 Child Care and Protection Policy (2020–2030)	Sets a strategic and high-level direction for child protection in Samoa. Led by MWCSO. (4) Includes policies to prevent, eliminate, and address all forms of child labor and child trafficking, as well as to regulate, monitor, and evaluate child labor in the formal and informal business and employment sectors. (25) During the reporting period, MWCSO implemented community awareness programs and facilitated the Inter-Agency Essential Services Guide on a range of social issues pertaining to children. (26)
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	Addressed, developed, and implemented strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. A multinational strategic framework program that consisted of 14 South Pacific nations. (27) Activities during the reporting period were conducted under the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022). (28,29)

The government has not integrated child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Strategy for the Development of Samoa or the Education Sector Plan (2019–2024), which detail the Government of Samoa's goals and key outcomes regarding education and development priorities. (30,31)

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 problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	\$19 million, Government of Australia-funded, 4-year project implemented by UNICEF in 14 Pacific Island countries, aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. Prioritizes children's rights including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. (27,28) UNICEF has extended the program to 2023–2037, with approximately \$27 million allocated for child protection programs, including programs focused on eliminating child labor. (32)
The Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme and Government Grant to Mission and Public Schools†	Provide financial support to families to assist with ancillary school fees, supplies, and equipment that their children may need during the school year. (11,33) Both programs were active during the reporting period. (26)
One Government Grant†	Provides direct financial support to Samoan primary and secondary public schools, mission and private schools, and primary schools for students with disabilities and special needs to offset fees normally charged to students. (34,35) The government allocated approximately \$6.5 million for the One Government Grant in fiscal year 2022–2023. (26)

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 Samoa.

Although the government has implemented educational support programs, research found no evidence that it has carried out programs specifically designed to assist children engaged in street work, including vending.

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 Samoa (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2017 – 2022
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that the Labor and Employment Relations Regulations specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken and define the activities that are permitted.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that the types of work that children perform in Samoa that include work for long hours and in an unhealthy environment, including street work, are prohibited for children under age 18.	2022
	Raise the minimum age for work from 15 to 16 to align with the compulsory education age.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits commercial sexual exploitation of children ages 16 to 18.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery and practices similar to slavery or debt bondage.	2021 – 2022
Enforcement	Strengthen the inspection system by permitting and conducting unannounced inspections.	2022
Government Policies	Integrate strategies to eliminate and prevent child labor into the Strategy for the Development of Samoa and the Education Sector Plan.	2012 – 2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in Samoa to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Institute programs designed to address child labor in street work, including vending.	2009 – 2022

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