

FIJI

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Fiji made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government allocated \$45 million to launch the “Back to School Support” program, which directly provides \$200 to each student to spend on school-related items. The government also increased the budget for the Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation by approximately \$18 million to support the Ministry’s various social programs. However, despite these efforts to address child labor, Fiji’s light work provisions are not specific enough to prevent children from being involved in child labor. Furthermore, research was unable to determine whether the government has established a policy to reduce and eliminate child labor or whether Fiji’s coordinating body was active during the reporting period.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	29.3% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	97.0%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	50.0%

Children in Fiji 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 child labor in agriculture.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Working in agriculture and fishing.†



Services

Engaged in begging, domestic work, street work, including vending and washing cars. Also working in garages, retail shops, and roadside stalls; garbage scavenging;‡ and collecting scrap metal.†



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Also forced labor in domestic work and use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking.

† 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.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Fiji’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Ensure that the law’s light work provisions specify the activities in which light work may be undertaken for children aged 13 to 15.

Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.

Enforcement

Ensure labor inspectors receive adequate training to fully understand child labor and forced labor laws, including indicators of forced labor.

Publish labor law enforcement information, including the amount of funding allocated for the labor inspectorate, if training for new labor inspectors was provided, if unannounced inspections were conducted, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of child labor penalties imposed.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont.)

Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies, including the Fiji Police Department, receive adequate anti-trafficking training.

Publish criminal law enforcement information, including whether investigations into worst forms of child labor violations were conducted and whether penalties were imposed.

Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies, such as the Fiji Police Department, investigate worst forms of child labor violations in high-risk sectors, including commercial sexual exploitation in hotels and on private yachts.

Coordination

Publish activities undertaken by the National Coordinating Committee on Children to ensure it is able to carry out its intended mandates.

Government Policies

Publish activities undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking.

Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation and domestic work.

Social Programs

Institute a program to provide support services for children removed from the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced domestic work; and provide them with social services such as housing, medical care, psychological support, and job skills training.

Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, by ensuring that school lunch, uniforms, footwear, and supplies are provided for children whose families cannot afford these essentials.

Improve access to education for children in remote areas by establishing schools nearer to these communities or by improving access to adequate technology to allow for remote learning.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Some families living in rural villages or on Fiji’s outer islands follow a traditional practice of sending children to live with relatives in larger cities where education is more easily accessible. However, this practice puts some children at risk of domestic servitude and labor trafficking, including being coerced to engage in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, shelter, or school fees.



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Despite the government launching the “Back to School Support” program, which directly provides \$200 to each student to spend on school-related items, financial barriers inhibit low-income parents from sending their children to school due to the cost of supplies, including stationery, footwear, uniforms, and meals. In remote areas, children often have difficulty accessing schools and face telecommunication and internet connectivity issues. Finally, the impact of natural disasters, such as floods, on critical infrastructure like roads and school buildings can limit students’ access to online learning materials.













LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Fiji has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Fiji’s laws do not meet the international standard on light work because its light work framework does not prescribe activities that are permissible for children.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 15 Years		Article 92 of the Employment Relations Promulgation
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Article 40 of the Employment Relations (Administration) Regulations; Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order

Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles 6 and 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 21 of the Immigration Act; Articles 103, 118, and 119 of the Crimes Decree
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 91 and 256 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 2, 17–20, 22, and Schedule 2 of the Immigration Act; Articles 114, 117, and 120 of the Crimes Decree
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 225–227 of the Crimes Decree; Article 62A of the Juveniles (Amendment) Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 58 of the Juveniles Act
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 16 Years		Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	 *	Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		
Compulsory Education Age, 15 Years		Compulsory Education Orders 1997, 1998, and 1999; Compulsory Education Regulations 1997, Art. 3
Free Public Education		Part 9 of the Fiji Education Act 1978

* Country has no conscription

The Employment Relations Promulgation specifies the conditions under which children ages 13 to 15 may engage in light work, but it does not include a list of activities that are permissible. Additionally, Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Force Act permits the commander to recruit children as young as 16 into the military and does not provide safeguards to ensure voluntary recruitment. Military recruitment of children by non-state armed groups is also not prohibited. Finally, although in practice free education is provided to children in Fiji, Part 9 of the Education Act of 1978 allows fees to be charged.

**ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR**

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to address child labor. However, the government did not publish data on its labor and criminal law enforcement activities.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR): Enforces and ensures compliance with child labor laws and monitoring the status of child labor employment. Under the Employment Relations Promulgation, MEPIR labor inspectors can conduct workplace inspections to identify child labor law violations and issue penalties for breaches of child labor laws. Maintains a 24-hour phone line to accept reports of child labor and refers children to social services when appropriate. MEPIR did not provide data on child labor cases and inspections for this report.

Fiji Police Force: Investigates criminal violations related to child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. Operates an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit to investigate all forms of trafficking activities.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

In 2023, 36 labor inspectors conducted an **unknown** number of worksite inspections, finding an **unknown** number of child labor violations. It is **unknown** whether investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions were initiated, or perpetrators were convicted.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Fiji established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, the government did not report specific activities undertaken during the reporting period.

National Coordinating Committee on Children: Coordinates child labor and child safety enforcement efforts. Comprises the Fiji Police Force, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Solicitor General’s Office, the Department of Social Welfare, MEPIR, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and NGOs that work on child labor issues.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Fiji established a policy related to child labor. However, this policy does not cover all worst forms of child labor, including forced domestic service.

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.

National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2021–2026): Sets yearly targets to achieve the goals outlined in the Human Trafficking Strategy. Includes a special focus on assisting child survivors of trafficking and other objectives such as strengthening counter-human trafficking mechanisms, protecting survivors, suppressing criminal networks, prosecuting traffickers, and sharing intelligence to address the sexual exploitation of children.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Fiji funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors, including in commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and domestic servitude.

* Program was launched during the reporting period.
 † Program is funded by the Government of Fiji.
 ‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.

Education Assistance Programs:† Funding for education, including the Free Education Grant which ensures that all children with Fiji citizenship have access to free and compulsory primary education, increased in the reporting period. Additionally, the government launched the Back-to-School Support* plan, which provides \$200 for students to spend on school-related items and allocated \$45 million in the 2023–2024 budget to support the initiative.

Social Programs Provided by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA):† MWCPA provides support for Fiji’s Poverty Benefit Scheme, the Child Protection and Disability Allowance Programs, the Social Pension Scheme, and the Food Voucher Scheme. The MWCPA was allocated a budget of \$88 million for its activities in the fiscal year 2022–2023, an increase of approximately \$18 million from the previous fiscal budget.

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects
 For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports