

# MAURITIUS

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Mauritius made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In January 2024, the government enacted amendments to its Combating Trafficking in Persons Act, which established a new specialized police unit to investigate trafficking crimes and a subcommittee in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to monitor cases of human trafficking. The government also held multiple trainings on victim sensitivity-focused interviewing techniques for enforcement officials. The government should consider strengthening its implementation of policies and social programs to improve the standard of care and availability of housing for victims of child commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, its police force lacks sufficient human resources and training in child-sensitive interview techniques for the investigation of child labor crimes. Lastly, some schools with poor accessibility and accommodations increased the likelihood of labor exploitation among children with disabilities.



## PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Some children in Mauritius are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and illicit activities, including selling drugs. Children also engage in child labor in construction and street vending.

### Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



#### Agriculture

Farming, including animal rearing. Fishing, including diving, and casting nets and traps.



#### Industry

Construction.



#### Services

Street work, including vending, begging, and working in the transportation sector.



#### Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor<sup>‡</sup>

Commercial sexual exploitation. Use in illicit activities, including trafficking of drugs.

<sup>‡</sup> 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 Mauritius’ implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

### Legal Framework

Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.

Ensure that the law’s light work provisions limit the number of hours for light work.

### Enforcement

Conduct labor inspections in all sectors in which children work, including in the informal sector.

Conduct unannounced labor inspections as required by the Workers’ Rights Act, including on private properties that operate farms and throughout the informal sector.

Increase the personnel, training, equipment, and funding for agencies responsible for enforcing criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including training related to child interview techniques and responding to commercial sexual exploitation.

Ensure that labor inspections are thorough and take steps to verify if child labor or hazardous work is taking place.

### Coordination

Ensure that coordination mechanisms to address the worst forms of child labor share information, improve coordination, and prevent overlap in activities.

**Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont.)**

**Government Policies**

Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education Policy and the National Sport and Physical Activity Policy and publish results from activities implemented.

**Social Programs**

Conduct a comprehensive study of children’s activities to determine whether they are engaged in or at risk for involvement in child labor.

Ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, have equal access to education.

Ensure that appropriate standards of care are in place for child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and that they receive comprehensive social services in facilities that are not overcrowded.

Publish activities undertaken to implement the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Program.

 **CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**

Reporting shows that children from low-income families in Mauritius engaged in child labor activities on construction sites and in street vending, domestic work, animal rearing, agriculture, and the transportation and selling of goods. Traffickers also exploit children from low-income communities, including via online platforms. Because Mauritius has never conducted a national child labor survey, information on the prevalence of child labor in the country is limited.

 **BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS**

Children with physical disabilities have the right to attend public schools and have benefited since 2019 from supportive infrastructure following enactment of the 2018 Special Education Needs Authority Act. However, some children with physical disabilities still reportedly faced constraints because educational facilities had not been properly equipped to enable their access. Additionally, children with mental disabilities attended separate schools that reportedly lacked the necessary psychological and social support. However, the Ombudsperson for Children’s Office issued a report providing recommendations to improve these students’ education and hosted several workshops in 2023 on inclusive education.

 **LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR**

Mauritius has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Mauritius’s Workers’ Rights Act permits children under age 16 to do light work in family businesses that are not harmful to their health, development, or education, but establishes no limit on the number of hours children can perform light work.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, <b>16 Years</b>		Articles 2 and 8 of the Workers’ Rights Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, <b>18 Years</b>		Articles 2 and 9 of the Workers’ Rights Act
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Section 8 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles 2, 11, 14, and 21 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 6 of the Constitution
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Article 13A of the Child Protection Act; Articles 2, 11, 14, and 21 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act

**Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)**

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 13A and 14 of the Child Protection Act; Article 253 of the Criminal Code; Articles 2 and 11 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act; Articles 19–21 of the Children’s Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Articles 30.1b–e, 38a, 41.1f, and 41.2 of the Dangerous Drugs Act
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		Article 63 of the Criminal Code (15)
Compulsory Education Age, <b>16 Years</b>		Article 37.2 of the Education Act (18)
Free Public Education		Article 35 of the Education Act (18)

\* Country has no conscription  
 † Country has no standing military

A November 2023 amendment to the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act went into force on January 15, 2024, mandating the creation of a Combating Trafficking in Persons Unit within the police force to investigate human trafficking crimes. The Workers’ Rights Act specifies that a child under age 16 may not be employed to work in any occupation but allows for children to do light jobs in family businesses that are not harmful to their health, development, or education. However, the law does not limit the number of hours for light work.

**ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR**

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to address child labor. However, labor inspectors identified no child labor violations when conducting inspections during the year.

**Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

**Ministry of Labor, Human Resource Development and Training:** Enforces all labor laws, including those related to child labor. Advises workers and employers of their rights and responsibilities while improving relationships between them. Can initiate civil and criminal proceedings on behalf of workers who have allegedly had their rights violated by employers.

**Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions:** Coordinates with relevant ministries, such as the Brigade for the Protection of the Family, to investigate and prosecute crimes related to the worst forms of child labor. Following the creation of a Trafficking in Persons Unit within the Mauritius Police Force, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions established a subcommittee to monitor cases of trafficking in persons, including for child commercial sexual exploitation and forced child labor.

**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	N/A
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	N/A

Between January and October of 2023, **122** labor inspectors conducted **7,950** worksite inspections, but identified **0** cases of child labor. There were also **3** investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, although the number of prosecutions initiated and perpetrators convicted is **unknown**.



**COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

<p><b>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</b></p> <p>Mauritius established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, there is a continued need for improved interagency communication, data collection, information sharing, and cooperation in responding to child labor cases.</p>	<p><b>Child Services Coordinating Panel:</b> Led by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (MOGE) and launched in October 2021. Includes representatives of six government ministries, the Mauritius Police Force, and NGOs. Responsible for the coordination of public services and collaborating with stakeholders. The panel met several times in 2023 and encouraged the amendment to the Trafficking in Persons Act that created the Trafficking in Persons Unit within the Police Force.</p>
<p><b>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</b></p> <p>Mauritius established policies related to child labor. However, it is unknown whether activities were carried out to implement the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education Policy and the National Sport and Physical Activity Policy.</p>	<p><b>Nine Year Continuous Basic Education Policy (2017–2030):</b> Aims to enable all students to successfully complete 9 years of basic schooling and forms part of a package of reforms designed to strategically transform the education system in Mauritius. Implemented by the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology. Research was unable to determine specific activities undertaken during the reporting period.</p> <p><b>National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2022–2026):</b> Aims to protect human trafficking victims, prosecute perpetrators, and gather data on human trafficking crimes. The Inter-Ministerial Committee was reconstituted in August 2023 under the Minister of Labor and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating human trafficking issues, including the implementation of this plan.</p> <p><b>National Sport and Physical Activity Policy (2018–2028):</b> Provides a structured sports program available to all ages. Focuses on children and young adults, offering after-school recreational activities to help reduce children’s vulnerability to child labor and illicit activities. Research was unable to determine specific activities undertaken during the reporting period.</p>
<p><b>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</b></p> <p>Mauritius funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate service provision to child survivors of the worst forms of child labor.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.</i>  <i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p><b>National Children’s Council:</b><sup>†</sup> Overseen by MOGE, offers a wide range of services and facilities, including day care, shelters, creativity centers, children’s clubs, and school child protection clubs around the island. Awareness-raising campaigns on the exploitation of children reached approximately 7,050 primary and secondary school students from January to December 2023. The government has established the National Children’s Council to improve the effectiveness of institutional care facilities and shelters. Evidence suggests that there continues to be a lack of appropriate standards of care, inadequate provision of services, and overcrowding in some centers that house orphans, child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, and child survivors of other types of abuse.</p> <p><b>Eradication of Absolute Poverty Program:</b><sup>†</sup> Provides support to families living in absolute poverty through empowerment and income programs administered by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity. Activities include a monthly child allowance, provision of free school materials, examination fees support, medical screening, housing support, and counseling. The program was active in 2023.</p> <p><b>Awareness-Raising Programs on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking:</b><sup>†</sup> Educate the public on preventing commercial sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking, created by MOGE. In 2023, MOGE’s Child Development Unit undertook 6 commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) awareness campaigns in local communities and youth organizations that reached 245 people. MOGE “drop-in” centers cared for CSEC victims and carried out 49 awareness campaigns that reached 6,199 people between January and October 2023.</p>

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