

Botswana

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Botswana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government amended its Anti-Human Trafficking Act to expand the list of crimes that fall under the definition of human trafficking and to strengthen penalties for human trafficking—including by removing fines in lieu of imprisonment. The government also established a multistakeholder National Technical Committee on Child Labor, which will be responsible for developing a National Action Plan on Child Labor. In addition, Botswana increased birth registrations to mitigate the lack of identity documentation as a barrier to education. Despite these efforts, gaps remain in the country's legal framework, including the lack of a minimum age for compulsory education and a lack of a list of hazardous work activities for children. The government did not collect or publish data on the full extent or nature of child labor throughout Botswana. In addition, social programs to address child labor are insufficient to fully address the scope of the problem, especially in commercial sexual exploitation, cattle herding, and domestic work.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	Unavailable
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	Unavailable

Children in Botswana 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, domestic work, and street work.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Herding, spraying, dehorning, branding, milking, rearing, and castration of livestock. Other farming activities, such as mending fences.
Services	Domestic work and street work, including vending.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Forced labor in herding and in domestic service.

‡ 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 Botswana's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Area	Suggested Actions
Legal Framework	Specify in the law's light work provisions the activities and conditions in which children aged 14 to 17 may undertake light work.
	After consulting employers’ and workers’ organizations, determine by law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children.
	Criminally prohibit the use of a child for prostitution.
	Require by law compulsory education to age 15, which is the minimum age for employment.

Area	Suggested Actions
Enforcement	Ensure enforcement officials are equipped with adequate financial resources, equipment, personnel, and technical expertise, to adequately enforce labor laws in all geographic regions, including by institutionalizing training, to address child labor in all economic sectors and geographic regions including in geographically large districts and on farms and cattle posts, and by increasing the number of labor inspectors from 50 to 76 to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 1,135,000 people.
	Publish information on labor law enforcement, including funding specifically allocated to conduct inspections.
	Conduct criminal investigations of suspected or reported child labor crimes.
	Publish disaggregated information about law enforcement efforts, including number of investigations, prosecutions initiated, convictions, and penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.
	Authorize labor inspectors to access worksite premises and conduct inspections at farms and in domestic households, even without workplace owners' consent.
	Establish a digital tracking system for worst forms of civil child labor inspections.
	Provide criminal law enforcement bodies with sufficient resources, personnel, and training to assist child victims of exploitation, particularly to address the worst forms of child labor.
Coordination	Ensure that the National Technical Committee on Child Labor develops the National Action Plan on Child Labor.
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation and forced child labor in cattle herding and in domestic service.
	Implement key policies related to child labor and child well-being, like the National Youth Policy, and annually publish results from activities implemented.
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.
	Remove educational barriers by reducing travel distances to reach schools; preventing abuse, harassment, and violence in schools; increasing resources for students with disabilities; providing schooling to children in their native languages; eliminating or subsidizing school fees; ensuring education access for refugee and asylum-seeking children (including those from among refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Tanzania, and Ethiopia); and expanding birth registration and national identification for pastoralist children and children born outside of health facilities.
	Publish activities implementing social programs related to child labor, such as maintaining shelters for victims of human trafficking.
	Establish government shelters to assist child victims of the worst forms of child and ensure that shelters are available to older child victims.
	Develop and implement programs to fully address the scope of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and cattle herding, especially taking into account San and rural children.
	Establish or expand programs that protect children without identification, such as those from rural or pastoralist communities, as well as children from refugee families who experience inadequate social protections.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children of native communities—the San, Basarwa, and Bakgalagadi communities—are particularly vulnerable to child labor, especially on private cattle farms, as they often lack identification and are therefore unable to attend school. San parents frequently encourage their children to work to support their families, and other communities such as the Basarwa and Bakgalagadi view child labor as a positive way to learn to work. Land displacement that disrupts pastoral lifestyles, and lack of legal recognition or citizenship, compound native communities' vulnerabilities to trafficking and exploitation. Some parents in poor rural communities also send their children to engage in domestic work in cities, or on farms or cattle ranches, increasing their vulnerability to labor

exploitation and trafficking. Reporting indicates that children in the Dukwi Refugee Camp (including those from among refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Tanzania, and Ethiopia) may be vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking due to limited access to education and earning opportunities; these children have reportedly experienced sexual exploitation and abuse and been exploited for sex trafficking and transactional sex. Refugee children may also be subjected to unpaid domestic work.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Insufficient transportation to schools in remote regions creates educational barriers for children, particularly those from rural areas or from minority ethnic groups such as the San and Basarwa. Children of native and minority groups face other challenges, including living far from schools, having to attend boarding schools, poor conditions and abuse in boarding schools, lack of birth registration or identification documents needed to enroll in secondary schools, and language barriers such as a lack of schooling in native languages. Refugee children and asylum-seekers also have limited or no access to education. Access to education for students with disabilities is also insufficient. Furthermore, reporting indicates that children may experience unsafe learning environments or sexual harassment. Additionally, Botswana is experiencing a shortage of active teachers due to a recruitment moratorium and a temporary training initiative. Finally, some parents view school fees as obstacles to attendance, although low-income children are exempt from paying them.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Botswana has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Botswana's laws do not meet international standards on compulsory age of education; the identification of hazardous occupations or activities for children; and commercial sexual exploitation of children because the law does not prohibit using children for prostitution.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	15	✓	Articles 2 and 107 of the Employment Act
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Articles 2 and 110 of the Employment Act
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		X	
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Articles 2 and 71 of the Employment Act; Section 114 of the Children's Act; Articles 2, 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Sections 260 and 262 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Section 114 of the Children's Act; Article 175 of the Penal Code; Articles 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		X	Sections 25 and 57–59 of the Children's Act; Sections 9 and 10 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Section 60 of the Children's Act
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	18	✓	Section 17 of the Botswana Defense Force Act
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		N/A*	

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Section 26 of the Children's Act
Compulsory Education Age		X	
Free Public Education		✓	Section 18 of the Children's Act

* Country has no conscription

In 2024, the Government of Botswana amended its Anti-Human Trafficking Act to expand the list of acts that fall under the definition of trafficking and to strengthen penalties for human trafficking—including by removing fines in lieu of imprisonment and by ensuring that the penalties for human trafficking crimes are commensurate with penalties for other forms of serious crimes, particularly for those involving children.

The Employment Act allows children to conduct light work activities at age 14, with restrictions on the number of hours a child can work during a single day and in a week, and requires the Labor Commissioner to approve any work outside of domestic service; however, the government has yet to determine the conditions or types of light work activities permitted. Although the Employment Act prohibits night work and underground work for children, the government has not determined by law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. Moreover, legal protections for children from commercial sexual exploitation do not meet international standards because the law does not prohibit using children for prostitution. Botswana provides free basic education but has no compulsory education age, which may increase children's vulnerability to child labor.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Botswana took actions to address child labor. However, insufficient human and financial resources hindered law enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs (MoLHA): Enforces child labor laws and conducts inspections under the Employment Act. Coordinates with district leaders, law enforcement officers, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), the Ministry of Justice and Correctional Services (MJCS), and the Botswana Police Services' Human Trafficking Department to respond to cases of child labor, child trafficking, and child welfare and to place children in safe environments. During the reporting period, MoLHA conducted labor inspections, and MoLHA's Department of Labor and Social Security coordinated with MJCS to conduct nationwide multistakeholder awareness campaigns on child labor and human trafficking. Reports indicate the labor inspectorate lacks the personnel, funds, training, coordination, and equipment to cover all districts and to conduct inspections in all economic sectors to maintain pace with industry growth.
Botswana Police Service: Responds to cases of labor law violations, including child labor violations, based on MoLHA referrals. Investigates cases of the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking.

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

In 2024, **50** labor inspectors performed **1,888** worksite inspections, finding **2** child labor violations. The government also conducted **1** investigation into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, initiated **0** prosecutions, and convicted **1** perpetrator.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Botswana established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, while the National Technical Committee on Child Labor is new for 2024, research found no development progress on Botswana's National Action Plan on Child Labor by the defunct Advisory Committee on Child Labor.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

National Technical Committee on Child Labor: * Established in August 2024 to coordinate and implement all activities to address child labor in Botswana. Comprises about 40 government officials as well as civil society, trade union, and employer organization representatives.

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

Botswana established policies related to child labor. However, the government does not have a policy specifically intended to address the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in cattle herding and in domestic service, and research was unable to identify activities undertaken for some of these policies during the reporting period.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

National Youth Policy (2010): Implemented by the Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Culture (MoYSC). Identifies groups of children who may need extra support, including youth involved in child labor. MoYSC officers engage with other departments and ministries to incorporate the policy into all programs and policies, including the Youth Officer at MoLHA, who participates in the National Technical Committee on Child Labor. Reporting indicates that the policy was active, but the government did not report activities specifically to address child labor during the reporting period.

Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan (2023–2028): Provides a framework to guide, facilitate, and enhance the national anti-human trafficking agenda. Outlines strategic interventions to protect and support trafficking victims, investigate and prosecute trafficking, and establish effective international anti-trafficking programs. The policy calls for trafficking awareness campaigns in schools and for a survey on human trafficking, inclusive of children trafficked for labor. The government allocated \$15.6 million to the plan for its 5-year duration. In 2024, the government rolled out its Anti-Human Trafficking Standard Operating Procedures, Anti-Human Trafficking Referral Mechanisms, and Anti-Human Trafficking Communications Strategy.

Botswana funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these programs do not cover the full scope of the problem, and the government did not report on specific activities implemented under the programs during the reporting period.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Government-Funded Programs to Prevent and Eliminate Child Labor: ‡ Government-funded programs that aim to prevent child labor and increase protections for vulnerable children. These include: NGO-run shelters funded by the Ministry of Local Government and Child Welfare that welcome human trafficking victims, including children; the National School Feeding Program, which provides meals to public school children in grades one through seven; the Remote Area Development Program, which provides a second meal to school children in remote areas and children from communities with limited access to services; the Orphan Care Program, which provides orphans with meals and school uniforms, subsidizes the cost of school fees and transportation costs, and provides exemptions from other costs and psycho-social support; and the MLGRD-managed Needy Children and Needy Students programs, which provide families with free meals, tuition exemptions, and school uniforms. Reporting indicates these programs were active in the reporting period, although it is unknown what specific activities were undertaken to implement them.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Botswana.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports