

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Fiji made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted two new laws, the Child Care and Protection Act, which criminalizes emerging threats children face in the digital age, such as online grooming, as well as the Child Justice Act, which establishes child-sensitive proceedings for children in conflict with the law. The government provided training for labor inspectors, criminal enforcement officers, and other government officials to identify the worst forms of child labor and carry out child protection efforts. In addition, the government formalized the Case Management Unit system to actively track and identify potential trafficking cases, established a standard operating procedure for human trafficking, and approved the institutionalization of the “Trafficking in Persons Training Program” to enable cross-governmental training related to the worst forms of child labor. The government also conducted awareness campaigns by broadcasting talk shows about child labor in multiple languages, holding awareness discussions during meetings with parents at school, and hosting the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect program. However, Fiji’s light work provisions are not specific enough to prevent child involvement in child labor. Furthermore, research was unable to determine 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 and 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 fishing and farming, including harvesting.†
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.

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law’s light work provisions specify the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken and limit the number of hours for light work.
	Ensure that the law establishes 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military with safeguards for voluntariness.
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under 18 by non-state armed groups.
	Establish by law free basic public education.

Area	Suggested Action
<b>Enforcement</b>	Increase funding and resources to continue trainings for labor inspectors 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, whether training for new labor inspectors was provided, whether unannounced inspections were conducted, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of child labor penalties imposed.
	Ensure that criminal enforcement agencies, including the Fiji Police Department, receive adequate anti-trafficking training.
	Publish criminal law enforcement information, including whether investigations into the worst forms of child labor violations were conducted and whether penalties were imposed.
	Ensure that criminal enforcement agencies, such as the Fiji Police Department, investigate the worst forms of child labor violations in high-risk sectors, including commercial sexual exploitation in hotels and on private yachts.
<b>Coordination</b>	Publish activities undertaken by the National Coordinating Committee on Children to ensure that it is able to carry out its intended mandates.
<b>Government Policies</b>	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation and domestic work.
<b>Social Programs</b>	Institute a program to provide support services to children removed from the worst forms of child labor, including from 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 to 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 coerced engagement in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, shelter, or school fees. Fijian children from the iTaukei community experiencing homelessness, those whose parents are abroad, and children who have experienced child sexual abuse are more vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. Additionally, children living on the streets or in informal settlements and children who have dropped out of school are at higher risk of being exploited for child labor.

## BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Despite the government continuing 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, including roads and school buildings, can limit students' access to attending school.

## 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.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	15	✓	Article 92 of the Employment Relations Promulgation
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Article 40 of the Employment Relations (Administration) Regulations; Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order
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	X	Article 7 (3) of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		N/A*	Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		X	
Compulsory Education Age	15	✓	Article 3 of the Compulsory Education Order 1997 and 1998
Free Public Education		X	Article 31 of the Constitution of Fiji; Part 9 of the Fiji Education Act 1978

\* Country has no conscription

In 2024, the government adopted two new laws: the Child Care and Protection Act, which, among other things, criminalizes several offenses against children, such as luring a child; as well as the Child Justice Act, which, among other things, includes provisions to establish the basis for the administration of a child justice system designed to reduce offending and re-offending by children in conflict with the law. Although the Employment Relations Promulgation includes a light work framework, it does not specify the activities or conditions in which light work may be undertaken or limit the number of hours for light work. 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. 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 2024, labor law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to address child labor. However, there were no documented actions by criminal law enforcement agencies.

### 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. However, MEPIR reports an insufficient number of labor inspectors for proactive labor inspections and relies heavily on reported child labor activities. During the reporting period, MEPIR trained 39 labor inspectors on child labor laws. In addition, MEPIR conducted child-centered trainings on the identification of child labor and the worst forms of child labor to 128 police officers, 17 welfare officers, 17 iTaukei Fijian cultural officers, and 101 officials from other government offices. MEPIR also offered training to a local non-governmental organization on its role in supporting victims of abuse. In 2024, MEPIR received an unknown number of child labor cases and conducted an unknown number of investigations.

**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
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	Unknown
Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

In 2024, 48 labor inspectors conducted 5,246 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

Fiji established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, it is unclear whether that coordinating mechanism carried out any activities during the reporting period.

### Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

**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. Research could not determine whether the coordinating body was active during the reporting period.

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

### Key Policies Related to Child Labor

**National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2021–2026):** Sets yearly targets to achieve the goals outlined in the Human Trafficking Strategy. Led by the Fiji Immigration Department (FID), 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. During the reporting period, the FID, in collaboration with other relevant government agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs), and international donor partners, evaluated the progress of implementation of trafficking in persons (TIP) efforts and activities in the existing National Action Plan. In addition, the FID formalized and approved the Case Management Unit to actively track and identify potential trafficking cases. The FID also approved a standard operating procedure for human trafficking; received

### Key Policies Related to Child Labor

approval to institutionalize the “Trafficking in Persons Training Program,” which enables the FID to collaborate with the Fiji Police Human Trafficking Unit (HTU) to deliver specialized training; and continued capacity-building training to frontline officers, immigration officers, police officers, labor officers, customs and border officers, and airline crew. Furthermore, the FID, Fiji Police HTU, and the Department of Labor conducted joint unannounced inspections of several commercial farms and construction worksites following reports of non-compliant labor practices and breaches of work permit conditions by employers.

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 and domestic servitude.

### Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

**Social and Education Programs:**† The Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Protection (MWCSP) maintains the Child Helpline 1325, a 24-hour phone line that accepts reports of child labor and refers children to social services when appropriate. In the 2024–2025 budget, the MWCSP was allocated \$200 million to support approximately 104,000 participants through its various social support schemes, which include the Family Assistance Scheme, Social Pension Scheme, Care Protection Allowance, Disability Allowance, Rural Pregnant Mother Food Allowance, and Transport Assistance Scheme. In 2024, the MWCSP invested \$250,000 to establish the country’s first Child Wellbeing Center,\* including offering a one-year program for drug rehabilitation and psychological support services to children with the goal of family reunification and completion of formal education. The Ministry of Education (MoE) continued to offer funding for education, including the Free Education Grant, which ensures that all children with Fiji citizenship have access to free and compulsory primary education. The MoE also continued its Back-to-School Support program, which provides \$200 for students to spend on school-related items, and allocated \$45 million in the 2023–2024 budget and \$40 million in the 2024–2025 budget to support the initiative.

**National Multi-Dimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (N-MODA):**‡\* Flexible methodology data collection tool intended to identify and address the needs of children in Fiji. Designed and launched through a partnership between UNICEF Pacific and the MWCSP. In 2024, the partnership initiated the first phase of the N-MODA program, with policymakers and partners tailoring the program to suit Fiji’s cultural and social contexts. The partnership also held validation workshops attended by government officials, non-government partners, and international agencies to discuss potential policy implications.

**Pacific Regional Initiative and Support for More Effective Counter Trafficking in Persons (Pacific RISE-CTIP) (2022–2027):** Strengthens national policies and supports locally led implementation of action plans that address the prevention of, protection against, and prosecution of human trafficking. During the reporting period, Pacific RISE-CTIP promoted public awareness of how best to combat trafficking in persons, which included the Butakoci Production theatrical musical.

\* Program was launched during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Fiji.

For references, please visit [dol.gov/ChildLaborReports](https://dol.gov/ChildLaborReports)