

# Morocco, including Western Sahara

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Morocco, including the region of Western Sahara, made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government significantly increased the Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills’ budget for civil service partnerships from \$307,298 to \$512,163. Government ministries and civil society organizations signed a partnership agreement for the care of children in vulnerable situations. Additionally, the Direct Social Assistance program benefited 5.4 million children during the year, and Morocco expanded access to school reintegration, shelter, and victim services in 2024 through a coordinated national response. However, the Labor Code’s minimum age for work provisions do not meet international standards as children 15 years of age and under are not protected when working in traditional artisan and handicraft sectors. Existing social programs are inadequate because they do not address child labor in all sectors. Furthermore, barriers to education, such as insufficient facilities, school fees, and lack of transportation, can prevent children from attending school, increasing their risk of engaging in child labor.

## PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	10 to 14	4.5% (150,178)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	6 to 14	82.9%
Combining Work and School	10 to 14	0.7%

Children in Morocco, including the region of Western Sahara, are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in construction, mechanic shops, and artisanal and textile industries. Children also perform dangerous tasks in farming, fishing, and forestry.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Farming, fishing, and forestry.
Industry	Working in textile factories and artisanal craft workshops. Construction.†
Services	Domestic work. Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs. Forced domestic work and forced begging. Forced labor as apprentices in construction, mechanic shops, and artisanal and textile industries.

† 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 Morocco’s, including the region of Western Sahara, implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children aged 15 and under are protected by law, including children who work in the traditional artisan and handicraft sectors for family businesses.
	Criminally prohibit the use of a child for prostitution.
	Ensure that the law establishes age 16 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment by the state military, with safeguards for volunteers.
	Ensure that laws establishing free public education apply to all children.

Area	Suggested Action
<b>Enforcement</b>	Ensure that officials are properly trained to identify potential trafficking victims and not charge victims for crimes committed as a result of their trafficking, including for involvement in prostitution.
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 488 to 813 labor inspectors to provide adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 12.2 million people.
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including information about labor inspectorate funding and penalties imposed and collected.
	Impose penalties with consequences significant enough to act as a deterrent whenever child labor violations are found.
	Establish referral mechanisms between labor law enforcement authorities and social services where they do not currently exist and strengthen existing informal networks for this purpose to ensure effective coordination on child labor cases.
	Publish information, in a timely manner, on criminal enforcement efforts, including the number of convictions, penalties imposed, and penalties collected for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.
	Ensure that the human trafficking hotline is always operational.
<b>Coordination</b>	Establish a mechanism to coordinate government efforts to address all worst forms of child labor in the country.
<b>Social Programs</b>	Expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem, including in rural areas and in forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation.
	Remove barriers to education, such as insufficient facilities, fees, and the lack of reliable and safe transportation, particularly in rural areas.
	Provide child protection units with resources to provide appropriate care to victims, including hiring a sufficient number of social workers.

## CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children, especially boys, in rural areas are vulnerable to child labor in agriculture. Girls in rural areas are vulnerable to recruitment for work in domestic service, where some become exploited in forced labor. Children transiting through Morocco are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging.

## BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children in Morocco, particularly in rural areas, face barriers to education, including the cost of school materials, poor facilities, and transportation issues. Approximately 83 percent of children in Morocco attend school. Among working children, approximately 85 percent do not attend school. Some children must reside in boarding houses to attend school to avoid long commutes, and some families are reluctant to allow children—particularly girls—to make the daily journey for fear of exposure to risks associated with traveling to school. Other barriers to education include fees associated with after-school activities and the required documentation for school enrollment. For example, identification documents are sometimes denied to children who are born to unmarried parents. Despite efforts to expand language access for Amazigh children, non-Moroccan children may also face language barriers in education, as few speak Arabic, the language of instruction. The government facilitated the civil registration of 2,185 children (1,291 boys and 894 girls) through court petitions to allow school enrollment. These efforts helped address exclusion from education for undocumented children.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The United States recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. The region of Western Sahara is subject to the same laws as the rest of Morocco. Morocco has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Morocco's laws do not meet international standards on minimum age for work because the law does not cover children working in businesses with fewer than five employees. In addition, there is no minimum age for voluntary state military recruitment.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	15	X	Articles 4, 143, and 151 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Law No. 19-12
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Articles 147, 150, and 181 of the Labor Code; Article 6 of Law No. 19-12
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Hazardous Child Labor List, Decree No. 2-10-183; Articles 179 and 181 of the Labor Code
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings; Articles 10 and 12 of the Labor Code; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		X	Articles 497–499 and 503-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Law number 1-73-282; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code; Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment		X	
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		✓	Article 4 of Law No. 44-18
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings
Compulsory Education Age	15	✓	Article 1 of Law No. 04-00
Free Public Education		X	Article 1 of Law No. 04-00

The Labor Code does not apply to children who work in traditional artisan or handicraft sectors for family businesses with five or fewer employees. Morocco's laws also do not prohibit the use of a child in prostitution. Additionally, free public education is limited to citizens because compulsory education is available to only Moroccan children.

## ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Morocco, including the region of Western Sahara, took actions to address child labor. However, an insufficient number of labor inspectors hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
<b>Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills (MEIPEEC):</b> Enforces child labor laws with its 54 inspection offices throughout the country. Partners with civil society organizations working to remove children from child labor and provide them with an education or vocational training. In 2024, MEIPEEC's budget for civil service partnerships increased from \$307,298 to \$512,163.
<b>General Prosecutor:</b> Prosecutes criminal offenses against children and processes cases involving children in the court system. Serves independently as a judiciary body separate from the Ministry of Justice.

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	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes

In 2024, **488** labor inspectors conducted an **unknown** number of worksite inspections, finding **75** child labor violations. The government also conducted **84** investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, initiated **18** prosecutions, and convicted an **unknown** number of perpetrators.

## COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Morocco, including the region of Western Sahara, established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, this coordinating mechanism does not address all forms of child labor in the country.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor
<b>National Commission for the Coordination of Measures to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons:</b> Coordinates the government's efforts to address trafficking in persons. Led by the Ministry of Justice, with 22 members representing various ministries and civil society organizations. In 2024, the National Commission signed a memorandum of understanding with Côte d'Ivoire to cooperate on the prevention of human trafficking.

Morocco, including the region of Western Sahara, established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor
<b>Roadmap to Eliminate Child Labor in All Its Forms by 2030:</b> Aims to eliminate child labor, particularly in agriculture, construction, and hazardous work. Has three main strategic priorities: addressing poverty and barriers to education; improving regulations governing working children; and improving governance, monitoring, and evaluation. Includes a steering committee to develop action plans, monitor implementation progress, coordinate stakeholders, collect data, and produce periodic progress reports. Active in 2024.
<b>Ministry of Solidarity, Social Inclusion, and Family (MSISF) Integrated Public Policy on the Protection of Children:</b> Promotes an interdisciplinary approach to respond to the exploitation of children and other issues. MSISF operates 41 child protection units that exist to protect children from all kinds of abuses, including child victims of trafficking. NGOs have raised concerns that there are not enough social workers to support these units. In 2024, government ministries and civil society organizations signed a partnership agreement for the care of children in vulnerable situations.
<b>National Strategy to Address Trafficking in Persons (2023–2026):</b> Aims to raise awareness of human trafficking, establish partnerships with stakeholders, promote development programs, protect children and other vulnerable groups, increase regional and international cooperation, and improve the identification and referral of victims to services. Provides for regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure that objectives are being met and describes stakeholder responsibilities. Coordinated by the National Commission for the Coordination of Measures to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons, which is led by the Ministry of Justice, with 22 members representing various ministries and civil society organizations. In 2024, 160 health professionals were trained on proper identification and referral procedures.

Morocco, including the region of Western Sahara, funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate because they do not address child labor in all sectors.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor
<b>Direct Social Assistance Program:</b> ‡ Includes programs that aim to improve access to education. Also provides direct support to orphans and others in vulnerable situations. Includes direct cash transfers to qualifying families whose children meet school attendance criteria. In 2024, the program benefited 5.4 million children.
<b>Protection and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking:</b> U.S. Department of State-funded program to improve the detection, referral, protection, and reintegration of victims of trafficking. In 2024, the Moroccan government expanded emergency shelter capacity and signed agreements with civil society partners to deliver psychosocial, legal, and reintegration services to trafficking victims, including victims of child labor trafficking and forced servitude. The initiative included pilot rehabilitation centers embedded within the existing social protection system.
<b>Government-Funded Education Projects:</b> ‡ Projects that aim to assist vulnerable children by preventing dropout and returning children to school, including the After-School Program for a Second Chance, Child to Child program, and Caravan for Direct Integration. These programs were active in 2024. Moroccan authorities reintegrated more than 71,600 children into school—38 percent of whom were girls—through expanded coordination between local prosecutors and the Ministry of Education. This included 184 meetings with provincial education directors and over 10,000 investigations into causes of school dropout. Civil registry enrollment was also facilitated for over 2,100 undocumented children to improve school access. The government also facilitated the civil registration of 2,185 children (1,291 boys and 894 girls) through court petitions to allow school enrollment. These efforts helped address exclusion from education for undocumented children.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Morocco.

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