

# Mozambique

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Mozambique made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government facilitated trainings on trafficking, including child trafficking, to stakeholders. Mozambique also hosted the Second National Conference on Combating Child Labor, which showcased best practices in preventing the worst forms of child labor. Some of the recommendations that emerged from the conference aimed to strengthen the monitoring of child labor in fisheries, revising and updating the Hazardous Work List, increasing collaboration with families, and conducting awareness raising. After an evaluation, the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor presented a 5-year assessment of the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security Advisory Council in August 2024. However, prohibitions against the commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards because laws do not specifically criminalize the use of a child for prostitution. In addition, existing social programs are insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem.

## PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	14.9% (1,477,994)
Boys		15.4%
Girls		14.5%
Urban		5.2%
Rural		19.6%
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	6.7% (129,204)
Boys		8.7%
Girls		4.6%
Urban		3.4%
Rural		8.8%
Attending School	5 to 14	63.6%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	13%

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14	
Sector/Industry	Percent of Population
Agriculture	94.5%
Industry	1.2%
Services	4.3%

Children in Mozambique are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in tobacco production.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Farming, including tobacco production on smallholder farms,† handling dangerous pesticides and tools, and herding livestock. Fishing,† including catching and transporting bait and fish, handling nets, and cleaning boats. Forestry† and horticulture, including cutting wood, climbing trees to collect fruit, and hunting for small and wild animals.
Industry	Artisanal mining,† including working underground, using heavy hand tools to excavate pits, operating crushing and milling machines without protection, and panning mineral-bearing material in streams using chemicals. Construction.†
Services	Domestic work,† including childcare.† Street work, including vending, and car washing.†
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, farming, fishing, forestry, mining, and vending. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking, theft, poaching, and by non-state armed groups in armed conflict.

† 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.

In 2024, children were forcibly recruited and used as soldiers, cooks, and laborers in northern Mozambique by the U.S. Government-designated terrorist group ISIS-Mozambique. In May 2024, ISIS-Mozambique recruited boys as young as age 13 and used them to raid the town of Macomia.

**SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR**

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

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Raise the compulsory education age to age 18 to align with the minimum age for work.
	Raise the minimum age to engage in apprenticeship programs in enterprises to age 14 to comply with international labor standards.
Enforcement	Publish data on labor law enforcement, such as the labor inspectorate’s funding, worksite inspections, imposed and collected penalties for child labor violations, and the number of child labor violations found.
	Adequately resource labor inspectors to ensure their capacity to enforce child labor laws.
	Publish data on criminal law enforcement, including investigations and prosecutions of the worst forms of child labor, perpetrators convicted, and penalties imposed.
Coordination	Clearly define the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor and National Reference Group’s responsibilities, and strengthen their coordination.
	Establish an effective plan to eliminate child labor in the informal sector.
Government Policies	Implement the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons and annually publish results from all activities conducted.
Social Programs	Ensure that all children, including children in displaced communities, have access to education by providing supplies, uniforms, and an adequate number of schools, classrooms, and trained teachers; eliminate barriers to education for rural children; take preventative steps to protect children from physical and sexual abuse in schools.
	Institute programs to address child labor in domestic work, and expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem.

**CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**

By June 2024, approximately 580,000 people, many of them children, were internally displaced due to natural disasters and increased terrorist-related violence in Cabo Delgado province, which placed them at a higher risk of child labor. Unaccompanied or orphaned children and children with HIV/AIDS are particularly vulnerable to child labor and its worst forms.

**BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS**

Although primary education is tuition-free through the ninth grade, families must provide school supplies, textbooks, uniforms, and, in most cases, meals. Barriers to education for children also include a lack of schools and classroom space, poor school infrastructure, a lack of meals at most schools, and an overall lack of school resources. Many students, particularly in rural areas, face difficulties traveling long distances to school. In addition, physical and sexual abuse is common in schools, and research found that some male teachers coerce female students into sex. Some girls drop out of school during pregnancy as a result of discrimination and stigma or because they lack financial and social support. The government estimates that only 49 percent of children complete primary education. Some LGB students faced discrimination at secondary schools, leading many to drop out. Children with disabilities also faced discrimination and a lack of accommodations. Increased displacement due to ongoing conflict, particularly in Cabo Delgado province, creates additional educational barriers, including 166 closed schools, depriving 48,000 children of access to education.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mozambique has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Mozambique's laws do not meet international standards on the minimum age for work because the law does not cover children working outside of formal employment relationships.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	18	X	Articles 21–22(2), 29, 39, and 249 of the Labor Law
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Article 29(3) of the Labor Law; Articles 1 and 3 of the Hazardous Work List
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Hazardous Work List
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Articles 10, 11, and 17 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 196 and 198 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Articles 10 and Annex (Glossary) of the Trafficking in Persons Law
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		X	Article 10 and Annex (Glossary) of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 212 and 215 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Articles 33 and 40 of the Law on Drugs
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	18	✓	Article 23 of the Law on Military Service
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		✓	Article 2 of the Law on Military Service
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Articles 5 and 10 of the Trafficking in Persons Law
Compulsory Education Age	15‡	✓	Article 41 of the Law of Basic Child Protection; Articles 6 and 7 of the Law on the National System of Education
Free Public Education		✓	Article 41 of the Law of Basic Child Protection; Article 7 of the Law on the National System of Education

‡ Age calculated based on available information

The Labor Law permits children to engage in apprenticeship programs in enterprises from age 12, which is not in compliance with international standards, under which the minimum age must be at least age 14. In addition, prohibitions against the commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards because laws do not specifically criminalize the use of a child for prostitution.

## ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Mozambique took actions to address child labor. However, the lack of resources to conduct labor inspections, including vehicles and fuel, hindered enforcement efforts.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
<b>Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MITESS):</b> Enforces child labor laws and regulations. Monitors implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

### Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

**Ministry of the Interior and the Attorney General's Office:** The National Police Force functions under the Ministry of the Interior and enforces all criminal laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Through its National Criminal Investigation Service, investigates human trafficking and violence against children. The Attorney General's Office coordinates the government's efforts against human trafficking and child labor, leads the National Reference Group for the Protection of Children and Combating Trafficking in Persons, and operates a hotline for reporting child labor cases.

### Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Unknown
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	No
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

In 2024, **156** labor inspectors conducted **5,870** labor inspections, but it is **unknown** whether child labor violations were found. It is also **unknown** whether investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions initiated, or perpetrators convicted.

## COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Mozambique established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.

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

**Multisectoral Group on Child Labor:** Led by MITESS, coordinates anti-child labor efforts and implements the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Includes representatives from every ministry, reports to the Prime Minister, and submits regular reports to the Council of Ministers. In collaboration with the National Reference Group, which is responsible for addressing human trafficking, assists children found in child labor. In 2024, the Group evaluated the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor and presented its 5-year assessment to the MITESS Advisory Council in August 2024.

Mozambique established policies related to child labor. However, lack of implementation of one these policies hindered efforts to address the worst forms of child labor, including forced domestic work.

### Key Policies Related to Child Labor

**National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor:** Aims to identify the underlying reasons for child labor in regions of concern (Tete, Manica, and Maputo provinces and Maputo City), and sectors in which child labor principally occurs (mining, domestic work, and agriculture). Includes activities such as mapping 70 percent of occurrences of the worst forms of child labor by province and withdrawing 20,000 children from the worst forms of child labor and enrolling them in the Basic Social Subsidy program. Calls for improved coordination between key government agencies, including the Attorney General's Office and the Office for Assistance to Families and Children Victims of Violence. Creates a group of government, civil society, unions, and formal and informal employer representatives to collaborate on issues identified in the plan. Research was unable to determine if activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period.

**National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons (2023–2027):** Aims to eliminate human trafficking through prosecution, protection, and prevention. Aims to reinforce coordination among relevant stakeholders. Research was unable to determine if activities were undertaken to implement the plan during the reporting period.

Mozambique participated in a program that includes the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, this program is inadequate because it does not address the child labor problems in identified sectors.

#### **Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

***Memorandum of Understanding to Combat Child Labor in Tobacco Growing (2018–2024)***: \$1.2 million, 3-year project funded by the Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing Foundation, focused on education, awareness raising, institutional capacity building, and revision of the government’s legal framework. Incorporated training for law enforcement officials. In 2024, inspections were conducted in the tobacco industry focused on child labor in Tete, Manica, Nampula, Zambezia, and Niassa provinces.

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