

Togo

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Togo made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established free, mandatory education through age 15 for all children and launched a free universal health insurance program, which expanded access to care for children and simplified intake processes. Togo also addressed education access barriers by increasing teacher recruitment and medical staff, providing furniture and specialized educational equipment, building restrooms for hundreds of schools, and constructing and refurbishing schools. In addition, the government provided daily free meals to 2 million learners, which boosted academic completion rates by 10 percent, as the school feeding program motivated registration and attendance. Finally, the government partnered with international organizations to increase birth registrations and provide training to officials on trafficking victim identification and protection, special enforcement and restitution procedures for children, and repatriation of child survivors of trafficking. However, despite these efforts, the government has not devoted sufficient financial and material resources to allow for inspections to be conducted in all sectors and fully enforce labor and criminal laws. In addition, Togo has not published enforcement data on child labor since 2017.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	44.4% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	89.0%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	50.4%

Children in Togo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including forced begging, smuggling, and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as the result of international trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture and domestic work.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Working in herding, fishing, and agriculture, including spraying pesticides† and handling fertilizers.†
Industry	Construction, working in quarries and mines, including excavating and carrying heavy loads.†
Services	Domestic work† and street work as vendors, beggars, and porters, sometimes carrying heavy loads.† Working as motorcycle repairmen. Working in blacksmith shops and at restaurants, sometimes at night. Garbage scavenging.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in begging, agriculture, mining and in quarries; in mechanic shops and blacksmith shops; in household and domestic servitude; in roadside vending; and as porters in markets. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of international trafficking. Use in illicit activities such as smuggling, including the transportation and sale of drugs.

† 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 Togo’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Raise the minimum age for all types of hazardous work from age 15 to age 16. Provide adequate training in the type of work being done for children under age 18.

Area	Suggested Action
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors have adequate resources, including fuel and transportation, to carry out inspections in all sectors, including the informal sector, private homes, and farms.
	Publish criminal law enforcement information, including the number of investigations into the worst forms of child labor crimes, prosecutions initiated, and convictions achieved.
	Publish civil law enforcement data, including on labor inspectorate funding; the number of labor inspectors; the number of routine, unannounced, and targeted inspections; the number of child labor violations found; and the number of penalties applied and collected.
	Provide criminal investigators with adequate resources, including training, to enforce worst forms of child labor laws, and investigate, prosecute, and impose penalties for convictions related to the worst forms of child labor.
	Provide financial and human resources to ensure that judicial processes for addressing child trafficking are effective and cases are handled in a child-sensitive and timely manner to empower survivors' reporting.
	Refer all cases of child labor found in labor inspections to social services. Foster coordination between the criminal justice system and social services to support survivors during judicial proceedings. Report on survivor intake.
Coordination	Increase funding and budgetary oversight of the National Committee for the Reception and Social Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking to fulfill its mandate to lead coordination efforts to repatriate child trafficking survivors and to consolidate information and statistics on child trafficking.
	Clarify mandates to empower coordinating bodies to carry out intended functions and regularly publish activities.
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Education Sector Plan.
	Publish activities undertaken to implement the Togolese National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor on an annual basis.
	Provide the National Commission Against Trafficking in Persons with the financial and material resources necessary to lead national anti-trafficking efforts effectively and fulfill the mandate of its anti-trafficking action plan.
Social Programs	Establish social safety net programs for low-income families to provide supplemental income and ensure that children are able to attend school rather than work.
	Alleviate costs of school-related expenses, increase the number of teachers and schools, and provide transportation to facilitate access to schools, especially in rural areas. Improve schools' infrastructure, including access to water, toilets, and adequate sanitation. Provide awareness programs to ensure that schools are welcoming and nurturing to all children, including children with disabilities, and that schools are free from sexual and physical violence.
	Enhance access to birth registration, including for displaced children.
	Compile intake data from people served by the <i>Allo 1101</i> hotline and the Reference Center for Guidance and Care of Children in Difficult Situations to better address child labor.
	Target social programs to address child labor in agriculture and domestic work, and particularly in commercial sexual exploitation; alleviating poverty; and promoting education.
	Expand support programs for child survivors to include providing protection, rehabilitation, and remedy. Enhance and publicize social safety net programs.
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Research indicates that commercial sexual exploitation of children is widespread in the Greater Lomé area and is on the rise in other parts of the country. Inflation and the security crisis in the Sahel, including in northern Togo, has worsened the situation. In 2024, NGOs and government officials reported markets selling Togolese children for commercial sex acts in Lomé and elsewhere in

the country. Women residing in Togo from other West African countries, especially Nigeria, compel girls from their families into commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, illicit networks exploit Ghanaian girls for sexual exploitation in Togo. Through a traditional practice called *confiage*, Togolese rural families send their children to urban areas for employment; as domestic workers and porters in markets, these children often forego schooling and are subjected to labor exploitation. Togolese children are sent by land to Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria, and via ship to Gabon for similar purposes. Togolese and other West African trafficking victims are also sent through Togo to the Middle East. Young boys are trafficked to Togo from the Volta region in Ghana, as well as from Benin, Nigeria, Niger, and Guinea to be exploited in forced labor in cafeterias and shops. Children are at higher risk for child labor due to lack of identity documents, poverty, and homelessness.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Although the government is pursuing a policy of free universal public school, the associated costs—including uniforms, books, and school supplies—make education prohibitively expensive for many families. Insufficient numbers of teachers and schools are a major barrier to education. Poor school infrastructure—including inadequate sanitation and lack of access to toilets and water—as well as physical and sexual violence in schools are also impediments. A lack of transportation and long travel distances to schools pose additional barriers for some children, especially in rural areas. While children with disabilities attended schools at all levels, with some attending schools specifically for persons with disabilities, negative perceptions of children with disabilities often excluded them from school. Moreover, internally displaced people face difficulty registering children for school due to lack of identity documents. Nationwide, a lack of identity documents often hinders children in rural and semi-urban areas from taking part in national exams. In northern Togo, ongoing attacks by violent extremist organizations pose another barrier to education, forcing the closure of several schools and creating the need to use some educational facilities to house internally displaced persons.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Togo has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. In addition, Togo's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	15	✓	Articles 192, 193, and 354 of the Labor Code; Article 262 of the Children's Code; Article 881.1a of the Penal Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Articles 2, 192, 193, and 354 of the Labor Code; Arrêté 1556 Determining Dangerous Work Forbidden for Children
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Articles 2, 263, and 264 of the Children's Code; Article 319.9 of the Penal Code; Articles 192 and 193 of the Labor Code; Articles 1–11 and annex of Arrêté 1556 Determining Dangerous Work Forbidden for Children
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Articles 7, 19, and 192 of the Labor Code; Articles 2, 264, and 411 of the Children's Code; Articles 150.3 and 151 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Articles 7, 192 and 355 of the Labor Code; Articles 2–6, 10, and 11 of Law No. 2005-009 Suppressing Child Trafficking in Togo; Articles 2, 263, 264, and 411–412, and 414 of the Children's Code; Articles 317–323 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		✓	Article 192 of the Labor Code; Articles 264, 276.f, and 387–390 of the Children's Code; Article 224 of the Penal Code Protecting Learners Against Sexual Violence in Togo
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Articles 192 and 356 of the Labor Code; Articles 2, 264, 276.i, and 405 of the Children's Code; Articles 317.7, 318, 319, and 329 of the Penal Code

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	18	✓	Article 426 of the Children's Code; Article 6, 7, and 42 of Law No. 2007-010 Regarding the General Statute of the Togolese Armed Forces
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		✓*	Articles 2 and 426 of the Children's Code; Articles 146.14, 147.11, and 342 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Articles 2 and 426 of the Children's Code; Articles 146.14, 147.11, and 342 of the Penal Code
Compulsory Education Age	15	✓	Annex, Section 1, Article 16 of the Constitution; Article 255 of the Children's Code
Free Public Education		✓	Annex, Section 1, Article 16 of the Constitution; Law No. 97-16 For the Creation of a Support Fund for Education; Décret 2008-129/PR for the Abolition of School Fees in Pre-Primary and Primary Schools

* Country has no conscription

Togo's Arrêté 1556 permits children as young as age 15 to perform some hazardous tasks, such as transporting heavy loads. This permission violates Article 3(3) of ILO Convention 138, which sets the age at 18 for hazardous tasks. Only when a child has received adequate training, and as long as their health, safety, and morals are fully protected, may they engage in hazardous work at an earlier age; and that standard is 16 years old.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor law enforcement agencies in Togo took actions to address child labor. However, civil unrest in northern Togo and insufficient allocation of government resources, including fuel and transportation, prevented the labor inspectorate from conducting inspections and from fully enforcing the law in all sectors.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
<p>Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Dialogue: Conducts labor inspections and enforces labor laws, including child labor laws. Runs a Committee for Social Reintegration of Children, which coordinates efforts on child trafficking. Through its National Working Group for the Elimination of Child Labor, coordinates the day-to-day operations of the National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor, rescues children from child labor situations, raises awareness, and collects data. The number of labor inspections decreased over the last 4 years because of material and financial limitations. Inspections have become difficult to impossible to conduct in areas of northern Togo affected by the fight against violent extremist organizations. Additionally, transport, fuel, and communication resources are in very short supply, making it difficult to carry out labor inspections. The government did not publish labor inspection data in 2024.</p>
<p>Ministry of Justice and Legislation (previously known as the Ministry of Justice and Government Relations): Enforces criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor and prosecutes violators in collaboration with the Ministry of Security, which includes the Police and Gendarmerie. Coordinates on children's cases with the General Directorate for the Protection of Children (<i>Direction Générale de la Protection de l'Enfance, DGPE</i>), which serves as the central point for social services, reintegration efforts, and law enforcement within the Ministry of Social Action, Promotion of Women, and Literacy. The limited number of judges and logistical difficulties make the prosecution of defendants slow, as the courts of assize sits only twice a year in Lomé and Kara. In 2024, the government collaborated with UNICEF to provide specialized training to prosecutors, judicial police officers, and directors of social programs in child protection standards and criminal procedures, incarceration alternatives, and restorative justice for minors. The government did not publish efforts by criminal law enforcement agencies during the reporting period.</p>

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	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

It is **unknown** how many labor inspectors conducted worksite inspections, or whether child labor violations were found. Reporting on criminal investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, prosecutions, and convictions of perpetrators were not made available by responsible government agencies.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Togo established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, lack of clarity of institutional mandates and poor coordination among relevant agencies hindered efforts to effectively address all forms of child labor.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor (CDNLTE): Housed within the Ministry of Labor and administered by the National Cell to Combat Child Labor (*Cellule Nationale pour l'élimination du travail des enfants*), the CDNLTE is the government's coordinating body for child labor issues, bringing together 17 ministries and representatives of NGOs. Direct coordination between law enforcement and social services in reintegration efforts is provided by the DGPE. The CDNLTE oversees a network of community-level child labor committees that provides support to vulnerable children and that continued to be active during the reporting period.

Togo established policies related to child labor. However, it is unknown whether activities were undertaken to implement the Togolese National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor during the reporting period.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Action Plan of the National Commission Against Trafficking in Persons (CNLTP) (2023–2026): Aims to strengthen systems to combat human trafficking in Togo, including child trafficking. This plan coordinates prevention and support efforts to enforce trafficking laws of stakeholders from multiple ministries, civil society, international organizations, and development partners. The CNLTP facilitated better interagency coordination amongst agencies and civil society organizations in 2024, trained law enforcement on standard operating procedures for the identification of indicators for human trafficking and the protection of people at risk, adopted a strategic plan, and revised its tools for data collection. However, the government did not provide the CNLTP with the financial and material resources necessary to lead national anti-trafficking efforts effectively.

Togolese National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2020–2024): A multisectoral approach that addressed formal and informal economies to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. It is unknown whether activities were undertaken to implement this plan in 2024.

Savanes Emergency Plan (2022–2025): Strengthens resilience in communities affected by violent extremism and terrorist attacks in the northern region. Objectives include broadening access to education and social welfare, as well as developing income-generating activities, particularly for women and youth. In May 2024, the government secured \$23 million from the World Bank to support displaced people and host communities in the north of Togo.

† The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.

Togo funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the full scope of the problem in all sectors, including in agriculture and domestic work, and particularly in commercial sexual exploitation.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor
Survivor Support Programs: ‡ The <i>Allo 1011</i> hotline offers reporting, referral, legal information, and emergency intervention services for cases of child labor, abuse, and trafficking via short messaging service, mobile application, and a real-time interactive website. The hotline is administered by the DGPE within the Ministry of Social Action, Promotion of Women, and Literacy, which runs a shelter in Lomé called the Reference Center for Guidance and Care of Children in Difficult Situations that supports survivors of child trafficking and child labor by providing housing, as well as legal, medical, psychological, and social services. Research indicated that the hotline and shelter provided services to child survivors of forced labor during the reporting year, but detailed data were not available.
School AMU: ‡ Formerly known as <i>School Assur</i> , this free healthcare service for public primary and secondary school students became part of Togo’s universal medical insurance program during the reporting period, expanding access to quality care for children and simplifying intake processes. <i>School AMU</i> provided over 4 million services during the reporting period, including consultations, analysis, prescriptions, and healthcare training, and close to 2 million children were enrolled in 2024.
World Bank-Funded Programs: The Government of Togo is implementing three separate programs funded by the World Bank that aim to reduce child labor by improving infrastructure and social safety nets for vulnerable families and increasing access to education. The Improving Quality and Equity of Basic Education Project (IQEBCP), implemented by the Ministry of Primary, Secondary, and Technical Education and Crafts, aims to improve access to education, particularly among girls. IQEBCP has built 232 new classrooms thus far and launched the second phase of its construction project in 2024, which will provide 263 new classrooms, 35 administrative blocks, 456 latrines, and 7,890 desks and benches spread across 76 sites. The Urban Water Security Project for Togo, a 6-year, \$100 million project implemented by the Ministry of Water and Village Hydraulics, aims to increase access to and improve quality of water supply and sanitation services, including water, sanitation, and hygiene services in schools and health care centers. During the reporting period, the program commenced mapping Lomé’s water sources to boost access to drinking water in the capital and beyond. Finally, Togo’s Second Sustainable and Inclusive Development Policy Financing* was secured in 2024 and provides \$200 million in funding to boost economic opportunities in rural areas, strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations, improve learning outcomes in underserved areas, empower women, and support macroeconomic stability.

* Program was launched during the reporting period.
‡ Program is funded by the Government of Togo.
†The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports