

Uzbekistan

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Uzbekistan made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In October, the President issued a decree that removed the requirement for labor inspectors to receive approval from the Business Ombudsman before conducting onsite inspections of private enterprises. The government also issued a Presidential Decree on poverty reduction that will improve children's access to education, and ratified several new International Labor Organization conventions, including Convention No. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health. However, despite these efforts, it is unclear whether labor inspections are taking place across all sectors at high risk for child labor, particularly in non-cotton agriculture. Further, there continue to be impediments to the operation of non-governmental organizations in addressing broader labor concerns. Human rights and civil society organizations, including those working on forced and child labor issues, have been denied official registration for bureaucratic reasons, sometimes for failing to meet registration requirements that had not been publicly specified.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	8.6% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	92.8%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	10.5%

Children in Uzbekistan 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 and public works.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Raising silkworms, tending livestock, other agricultural work.
Industry	Construction. Traditional handicrafts, including weaving, sewing, and ceramics. Mining.
Services	Street work, including vending, tire repair, and begging. Public works, including school improvement projects.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Forced labor in construction, non-cotton agriculture, and cleaning parks, streets, and buildings. Use in illicit activities, including theft and the production or trafficking of drugs.

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

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Update the labor law’s light work provisions to specify the activities and conditions in which children who have not yet completed their compulsory schooling may work.
Enforcement	Provide more detailed information on labor inspections, including the number of unannounced inspections, how many inspections are conducted onsite versus through desk inspections of documents submitted by businesses, and whether inspectors are targeting high-risk sectors.
	Conduct self-initiated unannounced inspections in all sectors, including at private enterprises and non-cotton agriculture sites, even if no complaint has been filed.
	Pursue investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of individuals involved in the worst forms of child labor.

Area	Suggested Action
Coordination	Remove obstacles to the registration of NGOs and other civil society organizations monitoring child labor, forced labor, and other labor rights issues, including making all registration requirements public.
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.
	Provide adequate resources and social support for rural children, children in poverty, and children living in institutions to mitigate their elevated risk of child labor.
	Ensure educational access for all children, including children who only speak Dari or Pashto.
	Ensure that mainstream schools are able to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities.
	Remove or defray informal school fees for students and their families.
	Ensure that schools in remote and rural areas have adequate water supply and sanitation facilities.
	Implement targeted programs to address the worst forms of child labor in public works, street works, and agriculture sectors other than cotton harvesting.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children living in rural areas and from low-income families are at higher risk of child labor and trafficking in persons. Those living in or aging out of welfare institutions, such as orphanages, are more likely to be subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

While all children are entitled to free education under Uzbekistan's laws, most schools lack facilities for children with disabilities, many of whom are sent to specialized boarding schools far from home. Additionally, some schools may charge informal fees, including bribes for admission or better grades, which impede educational access for low-income families. Children who only speak Dari or Pashto may have limited access to school. Schools in rural and remote areas may not have adequate water or sanitation facilities.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Uzbekistan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. In addition, Uzbekistan'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	18	✓	Articles 118 and 411–422 of the Labor Code; Article 49 of the Administrative Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Article 412 of the Labor Code; Article 49-1 of the Administrative Code; Article 44 of the Constitution
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Decree on Adoption of the List of Occupations with Unfavorable Working Conditions to Which It Is Forbidden to Employ Persons Under Eighteen Years of Age; Decree on Approval of Provision on Requirements on Prohibition of Use of Minors' Labor
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Article 44 of the Constitution; Article 7 of the Labor Code; Article 51 of the Administrative Code; Articles 135 and 148 of the Criminal Code; Articles 3 and 35 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Article 135 and Section 8 of the Criminal Code; Articles 3 and 35 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking; Article 3 of the Law on Protection of Children from all Forms of Violence

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		✓	Articles 128, 128(1), 130, 131, and 135 of the Criminal Code; Articles 3 and 35 of the Law on Combating Human Trafficking; Article 3 of the Law on Protection of Children from all Forms of Violence
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Article 10 of the Law on Guarantees of the Rights of the Child; Articles 56 and 127 of the Criminal Code
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	18	✓	Article 24 of the Law on Universal Military Service
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		✓	Articles 4 and 46 of the Law on Universal Military Service
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Articles 216(1) and 242 of the Criminal Code; Article 3 of the Law on Civil Organizations
Compulsory Education Age	18‡	✓	Articles 4 and 9 of the Law on Education
Free Public Education		✓	Articles 4, 5, and 9 of the Law on Education; Article 50 of the Constitution

‡ Age calculated based on available information

In October 2024, the government issued Presidential Decree no. 347, which removed the requirement for the labor inspectorate to obtain advance approval from the Business Ombudsman for all inspections of private enterprises. The labor inspectorate must still notify the Ombudsman, but this notification may also take place during or after the inspection. In December, the Senate approved a draft law amending the Criminal Code to increase penalties for human trafficking and introduce new aggravating circumstances, including the trafficking of minors. Additionally, in November, the government adopted Law ZRU-996 On the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence, which strengthened measures to protect the rights and interests of children. Among other measures, the law introduces a mechanism for children who have been the victims of violent crimes to apply for and receive protective orders. The government also introduced new standard form employment contracts that require all employers to prevent the use of forced child labor. However, the law does not specify the activities or conditions in which children who have not yet completed their compulsory schooling may work.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan took actions to address child labor. However, it is unclear how many inspections were performed onsite as opposed to through a desk audit, and whether inspections were appropriately targeted at high-risk sectors.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
<p>Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction (MEPR): Monitors labor issues and conducts labor inspections through the State Labor Inspectorate, including inspections for compliance with child labor laws. The State Labor Inspectorate can investigate offenses of forced and child labor and refer possible criminal cases to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Leads the Sub-Commission on Decent Work. In addition to labor inspectors employed by MEPR, local governments employ 200 “assistant inspectors” who can participate in labor inspections but are not allowed to impose administrative fines. Receives complaints, including on an anonymous basis, through a telephone hotline with a short, easy-to-remember number; a web portal; and a Telegram messenger bot. In the first 11 months of 2024, the State Labor Inspectorate received a total of 22,985 labor-related complaints. Of these, 13,824 complaints were resolved, 7,435 complaints received legal consultations, and 1,015 complaints were referred to other authorities for further review.</p>

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Internal Affairs: Investigates crimes related to child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children, which may then be prosecuted by the Prosecutor General's Office. Leads the National Sub-Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons. Maintains a database of human trafficking crimes, including child trafficking crimes, which aggregates relevant information received from other government bodies, citizens' organizations, non-profit organizations, and civil society groups.

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, **411** labor inspectors conducted **16,921** inspections and identified **0** child labor violations. The government conducted **3** investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, and it is **unknown** how many prosecutions were initiated or perpetrators were convicted.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Uzbekistan has established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, the government repeatedly denied the applications of human rights NGOs to officially register to operate in the country, including those that assist in monitoring child labor issues.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Decent Work: Coordinates state and local entities' efforts to address sex trafficking; analyzes and monitors the efficacy of government programs to address sex trafficking and forced labor, organizes international cooperation on efforts to address sex trafficking and forced labor, and provides legal and policy recommendations for improvement of government efforts in these areas. Chaired by the National Rapporteur on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Decent Work. Comprises two sub-commissions to address trafficking and decent work, respectively. The Ministry of Internal Affairs heads the Sub-Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons, and the Minister of Employment and Poverty Reduction heads the Sub-Commission on Decent Work. In 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a decree revising the Commission's name and making other minor changes to enhance coordination. The Commission also held three meetings during the reporting period, during which members reported on their relevant activities.

Uzbekistan has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Memorandum of Understanding Between the ILO and the Republic of Uzbekistan (2021–2025): Establishes terms of agreement between ILO and the government on cooperation to implement the Decent Work Country Program in Uzbekistan. In July 2024, the Director-General of the ILO met with Uzbekistan's President and agreed to initiate development of a new ILO Country Program for Uzbekistan.

National Action Plan on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2024–2027): * On February 21, 2024, Uzbekistan adopted a joint resolution “On the Implementation of the Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Connection with the Fifth Periodic Report of Uzbekistan on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” to implement the final recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. This resolution also approved a National Action Plan for 2024–2027.

* Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Uzbekistan 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 and in all states in which child labor has been identified, including in public works, street work, and agriculture sectors other than cotton harvesting.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor
National Agency for Social Protection: ‡ This agency, formed in 2023, is responsible for identifying child survivors of violence and exploitation, as well as those at higher risk of experiencing violence or exploitation, and providing them and their families with appropriate resources. During the reporting period, supported rehabilitation centers for the homeless and specialized schools for children with disabilities.
Better Work Pilot Program: Program launched in 2023 to engage ILO and the International Finance Corporation to support the improvement of labor standards and conditions in the cotton and textile industries, including the expansion of unannounced labor inspections and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. During the reporting period, 10 companies signed on to participate and another 8 entered the negotiations phase.
National Rehabilitation Center: ‡ MEPR-operated shelter that provides human trafficking survivors with emergency medical and social services and assists in social rehabilitation. Children are placed in specialized institutions, separate from adult survivors. In 2024, 25 child survivors of trafficking received services at the Center, which also provided rehabilitation programs to 1,454 child survivors of harassment and violence.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Uzbekistan.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports