

In 2017, Honduras made a significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government strengthened legal protections for children by publishing the updated list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children and increasing penalties for violations. The Secretariat of Labor and Social Security also launched a mobile application that enables the public to report child labor violations and the government reconstituted the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor to include relevant civil society organizations. In addition, the government supported the expansion of the Bright Futures project to reduce child labor and a new project to address child labor and forced labor in the coffee supply chain. However, children in Honduras engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and in commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking. Labor and criminal law enforcement agencies experience financial and human resource challenges that may hinder adequate law enforcement. Also, the government's social programs that address child labor in agriculture do not appear sufficient to address the scope of the problem nationwide, and the government lacks social programs to eliminate child labor in other dangerous activities, such as fishing, mining, and domestic work.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Honduras engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and in commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Honduras.

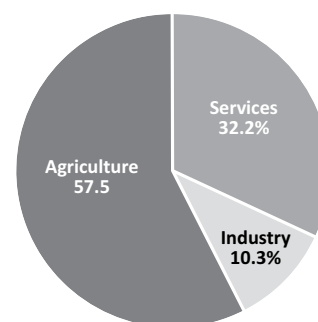
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	8.6 (158,891)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	87.7
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		83.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (7)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM) Survey, 2014. (8)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of melon, coffee, sugarcane, cereals, and okra (9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15)
	Harvesting mollusks† (16; 17)
	Fishing, including working as divers' assistants,† and diving for lobster† (18; 6)
Industry	Quarrying limestone† and production of lime† (19; 20)
	Artisanal mining† (3; 10; 21; 22)
	Production and sale of fireworks† (23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28)
	Construction,† activities unknown (4; 29; 6; 14)
Services	Street begging and vending† (4; 26; 30; 31)
	Work in repair shops,† including in mechanical repair† (4; 32)

Honduras

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Washing car windows† and performing at traffic lights† (1; 29)
	Scavenging in garbage dumps† (10; 33; 31; 34)
	Work in hotels and laundromats, activities unknown (4; 31)
	Domestic work† (1; 10; 35; 31; 14)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking (1; 2; 5; 36; 37)
	Forced begging (5; 26; 38)
	Use in illicit activities, including by gangs in committing homicides, extortion, and selling and trafficking drugs (5; 26; 29; 39; 40; 37)

† 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.




Reports indicate that 20 percent of the Honduran population is of indigenous or African descent and that children from these groups are particularly vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (41; 42) Children in Honduras engage in the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and recruitment by gangs into illicit activities. (43; 44; 45; 46; 36; 37; 47) Reports indicate that gangs sometimes threaten families as a means to forcibly recruit children into their ranks, where boys are used to commit extortion, drug trafficking, and homicide, and where girls are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation. (39; 36) Children who lack economic and educational opportunities are the most vulnerable and are also among the most likely to migrate to other countries. Once en route, they are also vulnerable to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (43; 44; 45; 46; 36; 37; 47)

In Honduras, access to education is often limited. Reports indicate that approximately 220,000 children between the ages of 5 and 17 lack access to the educational system. (9) More than 75 percent of these children live in rural areas, where lack of funding for schools and, in many cases, lack of any secondary schools, remain a problem. (9; 40) In urban areas, widespread violence and the recruitment of children into gangs hinders access to education because the journey to and from school has become so dangerous. In addition, school completion rates are low and many children fail to complete primary education. According to 2015 data, only 58.3 percent of girls and 47.4 percent of boys completed secondary school. (2; 48; 46; 36; 49; 50)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Honduras has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 120 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 15 of the Executive Agreement STSS-211-01; Article 32 of the Labor Code (51; 52; 53)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 1 and 122 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016 (51; 52; 54)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of the Executive Agreement STSS-441-2016; Article 8 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (51; 54)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 179E, 179F and 192 of the Penal Code (51; 55; 56)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013 (51; 55; 57)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 148 and 149A-E of the Penal Code (51; 52; 55; 56)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 134 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01; Articles 6 and 52 of the Law Against Trafficking in Persons (Decree 59-2012); Article 8 of the Legislative Decree 35-2013 (51; 52; 55; 57)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 12 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (51)
Non-state	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 10 of the Executive Agreement STSS211-01 (51)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17	Articles 8, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Articles 36 and 39 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence (52; 58)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 7, 13, and 21–23 of the Fundamental Law of Education; Article 36 of the Code on Childhood and Adolescence; Article 171 of the Constitution (59; 52; 58)

* No conscription (51; 60)

In 2017, the Government of Honduras passed a new labor inspection law with higher penalties for violations and published the updated list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children, which was finalized in December 2016. (61; 54)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist with the operations of the Secretariat of Labor and Social Security (STSS) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Secretariat of Labor and Social Security (STSS)	Conduct labor inspections and enforce child labor laws through the General Labor Inspection Directorate. (62)
Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children (OSPC)	Prosecute crimes against children, including trafficking of children, hazardous labor, forced labor, and commercial sexual exploitation. Coordinate with Honduran National Police to investigate crimes and protect victims. (2; 29)
Public Ministry's Technical Agency for Criminal Investigations (ATIC)	Investigate and technically support criminal prosecutions conducted by the Public Ministry, including by the OSPC, such as human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and child pornography. (3; 26; 29)
Prosecutorial Task Force to Combat Criminal Smuggling of Unaccompanied Children and Trafficking in Persons	Investigate and prosecute criminal organizations that engage in the illegal smuggling of unaccompanied children and human trafficking. Overseen by the Special Prosecutor Against Organized Crime and the Special Prosecutor for Children. (38; 63)

Honduras

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)

Organization/Agency	Role
Directorate of Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (DINAF)	Formulate, coordinate, and implement national plans concerning children and their families; monitor children's rights, including by investigating complaints of child labor and ensuring that victims receive government services; and coordinate state efforts with civil society institutions to protect children. Overseen by the Secretariat of Development and Social Inclusion. (26; 64; 65; 66)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Honduras took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the STSS that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including with regard to human resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	151 (67)	140 (47)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (67)	Yes (61)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (67)	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	Yes (68)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (40)	Yes (68)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	23,087 (40)	32,268 (69)
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown	32,268 (69)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	13 (67)	12 (69)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown	12 (69)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	Unknown	0 (69)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (67)	Yes (67)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (67)	Yes (67)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (67)	Yes (67)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (67)	Yes (67)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (67)	Yes (67)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (40)	No (40)

Labor union confederations, employer organizations, and human rights organizations have indicated that the level of funding and resources for the General Labor Inspection Directorate is inadequate to enforce child labor laws nationwide. (40) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Honduras's workforce, which includes over 3.7 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Honduras would employ roughly 249 labor inspectors. (70; 71; 72)

The total number of labor inspections suggests that each labor inspector conducted roughly 230 labor inspections during the year. It is unknown whether this high inspection ratio for each inspector affects the quality of labor inspections. (73) The STSS and civil society partners have also reported that the number of labor inspections conducted is insufficient to address the scope of labor violations in the country, including child labor violations. (40; 67) In particular, reports indicate that the STSS conducts most inspections in the urban areas of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula while rural areas and indigenous communities, where hazardous activities in agriculture and fishing or diving are concentrated, have had insufficient inspections to address the scope of the problem. (1; 41; 74) Under the new labor inspection process, regional STSS offices, rather than the Inspector General, now issue fines. Although the STSS did not introduce implementing regulations for the new labor inspection law during the year, labor inspectors received training on the new law as well as on agricultural labor inspections and occupational safety and health. (68; 61)

In August 2017, the STSS launched new mobile applications for the public to report child labor violations and to check minimum wage rates and school bonus amounts paid by employers to employees with school-age children. (75; 76) However, NGOs report that STSS procedures for responding to child labor complaints are often inadequately followed, largely due to institutional

weaknesses and a lack of resources. (26) Furthermore, there does not appear to be an adequate mechanism for the STSS and the Directorate of Childhood, Adolescence, and Family (DINAF) to reciprocally refer cases of child labor to each other, and reports also indicate that DINAF lacks sufficient resources to adequately carry out its mandates. (26; 29; 40)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Honduras took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including with regard to financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	Unknown
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (66)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (66)	Yes (66)

In 2017, the Public Ministry investigated cases involving the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children as a result of human trafficking, the production of child pornography, the use of children in illicit activities by gangs, and domestic servitude. By the end of the year, the Public Ministry had over 12 detainees on trial and achieved successful conviction for the production of child pornography and commercial sexual exploitation of children as a result of human trafficking. (69) Reports indicate that the level of funding and resources available to the Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children and other criminal law enforcement agencies are insufficient to address the worst forms of child labor nationwide. (66) Reports also indicate that the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of the worst forms of child labor is not sufficient to address the problem. (39) Research could not determine whether any children were rescued by the Public Ministry and if so whether they received services through DINAF, or how many cases of suspected criminal conduct related to the worst forms of child labor were referred by DINAF to the Public Ministry.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor	Coordinate government policies and efforts on child labor issues. Chaired by the STSS and includes officials from eight government ministries, DINAF, the Supreme Court, and other government entities. (77; 78; 62) Oversee regional sub-commissions, led by STSS and DINAF officials that implement national efforts at the local level. (77; 78; 62)
Inter-Institutional Commission Against Exploitation and Commercial Sex Trafficking (CICESCT)	Coordinate government and civil society efforts to combat commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, including of children. (79) Comprises representatives from 52 organizations, including several government ministries and NGOs. (79; 55; 80) Oversee 19 local CICESCT committees and implement the Strategic Plan to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking. (39) In 2017, the government doubled the budget and dedicated 40 percent of the increase to victim services. (81; 47)
Unaccompanied Children Task Force (UAC Task Force)	Provide for the safe repatriation of unaccompanied migrant children and coordinate their reintegration into their communities of origin. Led by the First Lady and comprising officials from seven government ministries, DINAF, and the National Institute for Migration. (38; 82; 77)
Ministry of Social Development	Coordinate social protection policies and the provision of services to vulnerable populations, including child and adolescent victims of violence, human trafficking, and sexual and economic exploitation. (2)

Honduras

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

In 2017, the government reconstituted the National Commission for the Gradual and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor to include relevant civil society organizations. (62)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor†

Policy	Description
Roadmap for the Eradication of Child Labor in Honduras	Aims to improve the government's response to child labor issues. Works at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels and addresses poverty, health education, and social development. (2; 83) Implemented by the STSS. (2; 26)
Strategic Plan to Prevent and Eliminate Child Labor (2016–2020)	Identifies lines of action for preventing and eliminating child labor, including by increasing child labor law enforcement, strengthening engagement with the private sector, developing procedures for inter-agency coordination, and developing social programs to support children removed from child labor. (78) Implemented by the STSS and other executive and judicial branch agencies, as well as employers', workers', and other civil society organizations. (78)
Strategic Plan to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Honduras (2016–2022)	Establishes national priorities to combat commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking in four principal areas: prevention and awareness; investigation, prosecution, and punishment of violations; detection, assistance, and protection of victims; and coordination and cooperation. (84)
First Public Policy and National Action Plan on Human Rights	Aims to implement the government's national and international human rights commitments, including those addressing child and forced labor. (29)
Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle	Aims to create economic growth, increase educational and vocational training opportunities for youth, and reduce violence in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, in part to decrease the number of unaccompanied minors who leave Honduras and other Central American countries for the United States and who are vulnerable to human trafficking. Signed by the presidents of each country in 2014. (85; 86; 87)
U.S.–Honduras Labor Rights Monitoring and Action Plan (2015–2018)	Aims to improve the enforcement of labor laws, including laws related to child labor, by implementing legal and policy reforms, strengthening the STSS, enhancing enforcement activities, and increasing outreach efforts. (88)

† The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (89; 90; 91; 92; 93)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor†

Program	Description
Better Life Voucher (<i>Bono Vida Mejor</i>)†	Government conditional cash transfer program that aims to reduce poverty by providing financial assistance to households when children meet educational and health requirements. Assists over one million children, with 74 percent of participants in rural areas. (80; 94; 47) Objectives include the elimination of child labor. (1)
Program to Combat Child Forced Begging†	DINAF program that identifies and rescues children who are subjected to forced begging and raises awareness of child forced begging through media. (29; 74)
Program for the Reintegration of Returned Unaccompanied Migrant Children	Government program that assists unaccompanied migrant children who have been returned to Honduras. Implemented by the National Institute for Migration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DINAF, SEDIS, and the National Center for Social Sector Information. (95)
Program to Prevent Sex Tourism Involving Children and Adolescents†	Government program that aims to raise awareness and provide training on sex tourism for the tourism industry. Implemented by the Honduran Tourist Board, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Tourism Institute. (2 96)
School Meals Program†	Ministry of Education program, implemented with support from the WFP and by the Office of the First Lady, that provides school lunches to students to improve nutrition and bolster attendance. (29; 82; 77)
USDOL-Funded Projects	\$2 million <i>Addressing Child Labor and Forced Labor in the Coffee Supply Chain in Honduras</i> (2017–2020); \$16.5 million <i>Youth Pathways Central America</i> (2015–2020); \$8.7 million <i>Bright Futures</i> (2014–2019); and <i>Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues</i> . During 2017, the Bright Futures project expanded to Atlantida and La Paz to reach indigenous children and children of African descent. For additional information please see our website.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor† (cont)

Program	Description
USAID-Funded Projects	USAID-funded projects, including Honduran Youth Alliance, which focuses on gang prevention, including for vulnerable youth; Strengthening Capacity to Build a Culture of Peace (FORPAZ), which aims to improve citizen security, including for at-risk youth; and Improving Education for Work, Learning, and Success (METAS), which aims to increase educational opportunities for youth. (74; 97)

† Program is funded by the Government of Honduras.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms. (1; 29; 98)

Although the Government of Honduras funds or participates in social programs that aim to eliminate child labor in forced begging, commercial sexual exploitation, and the illegal recruitment of children into gang-related activities, research did not identify programs that specifically target children working in other dangerous activities, such as fishing, mining, and domestic work. In addition, social programs that address child labor in agriculture do not appear sufficient to address the scope of the problem nationwide.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Honduras (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Publish information on the level of funding provided to the Labor Inspectorate.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure adequate funding for the STSS, including to follow established procedures for responding to child labor complaints, for sufficient numbers of labor inspectors according to the ILO's technical advice, and for labor inspections in areas where child labor is prevalent, such as rural areas and indigenous communities where children engage in agriculture and fishing or diving.	2010 – 2017
	Ensure that all labor inspectors receive training on child labor, and make information about the initial training for new criminal investigators publicly available.	2014 – 2017
	Determine whether the inspection ratio for each labor inspector is appropriate to ensure the quality and scope of inspections.	2017
	Ensure that there is an adequate, reciprocal referral mechanism between the STSS and DINAF for the enforcement of labor laws and the provision of social services for child labor victims, and publish information on the number of rescued children who receive social services, as well as the number of children referred by social services to criminal law enforcement agencies.	2014 – 2017
	Ensure that DINAF has sufficient resources to adequately carry out its mandates regarding child protection issues.	2015 – 2017
	Publish information on the level of funding for all criminal law enforcement agencies that respond to crimes concerning the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure adequate resources are provided to the OSPC to adequately investigate and prosecute crimes concerning the worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2017
	Publish information on the number of criminal investigations, violations, prosecutions, and convictions regarding the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2017
Social Programs	Increase access to education by increasing funding to schools, building more schools, particularly in rural areas, and enhancing efforts to protect students from gang recruitment and violence.	2014 – 2017
	Expand social programs that address child labor in agriculture and create programs that aim to prevent children from migrating and to eliminate child labor in other dangerous activities, such as fishing, mining, and domestic service.	2009 – 2017
	Ensure social programs reach children who are the most vulnerable to child labor, including children of African descent and indigenous children.	2017

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Honduras

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

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