

In 2018, Maldives made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Maldives Police Service conducted awareness-raising programs for 36 guesthouse operators and resort managers on protecting children from commercial sexual exploitation within the tourism industry. Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Maldives engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. The government has not determined specific hazardous occupations or activities that are prohibited for children, and the law does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation of children. Moreover, the government does not have a coordinating mechanism, policy, or program that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor in the country.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Maldives engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Maldives. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.9 (2,364)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	79.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2009. (5)

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
Services	Domestic work (1,2)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3)
	Forced labor in domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3)
	Use in the trafficking of drugs (6)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

No current data are available on child labor in Maldives, and a national survey on child labor has not been conducted. Maldivian children from the outer islands are brought to the capital, Malé, for domestic work. Some of these children are reported to be victims of forced labor and sexual abuse. (2) In addition, some girls from Bangladesh and Maldives are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to Maldives. (2) There also are some reports of foreign tourists engaging in commercial sexual exploitation of children. (3)




II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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



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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 has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Maldives' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including determining the types of hazardous work prohibited for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 6 of the Employment Act (7)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 7 of the Employment Act (7)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 3 of the Employment Act; Sections 12–16 of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (7,8)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 12–15 of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (8)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 17–19 of the Special Provisions Act to Deal with Child Sex Abuse Offenders (9)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 133(c)(1) of the Drugs Act (10)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children (11)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 36(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives; Article 5(b) of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children (11,12)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 36(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives; Article 5(b) of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children (11,12)

* No conscription (13)

The law does not prohibit using, procuring, and offering children for pornographic performances. (9) In addition, the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups is not prohibited.

Research did not uncover an English version of the 2014 amendment to the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children for review.

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 within the operations of the Labor Relations Authority (LRA) that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Labor Relations Authority, Ministry of Economic Development (MED)	Enforces the Employment Act, including child labor provisions. Conducts labor inspections and issues fines for violations. (6,7)
Family and Child Protection Department, Maldives Police Service (MPS)	Investigates complaints of child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Refers cases to the Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution and the Ministry of Gender and Family to provide victim services. (11) Employs eight officers in Malé to investigate child labor cases, including child commercial sexual exploitation and child pornography cases. (11)
Family and Child Protection Services, Ministry of Gender and Family	Receives referrals of children who have been exploited, including in commercial sexual exploitation and drug trafficking, and provides care for such victims. (6)
Anti-Human Trafficking Department, MPS	Investigates human trafficking-related offenses and enforces laws prohibiting trafficking in persons. Employs five officers to investigate human trafficking cases. (2,11)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Maldives took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the LRA that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of referral mechanisms.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (14)	\$547,747 (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	13 (14)	17 (6)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (14)	Yes (6)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	No (14)	No (6)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (14)	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	No (14)	No (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	288 (14)	356 (6)
Number Conducted at Worksite	288 (14)	356 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (14)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (14)	N/A (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (14)	N/A (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (14)	Yes (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (14)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (14)	Yes (6)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (14)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (14)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (14)	No (6)

The LRA lacks the financial and human resources necessary to adequately conduct inspections. Inspectors also have not received training on the identification and remediation of child labor. (6,15) In addition, although the labor inspectorate is authorized to assess penalties, no fines were issued in practice due to a lack of coordination between the LRA and the Maldives Inland Revenue Authority, which has the mandate to receive the payment of the fines. (6,7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in Maldives took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Family and Child Protection Department of the Maldives Police Service (MPS) that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including lack of resources for investigators.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (14)	Yes (6)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (14)	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	N/A (14)	Yes (6)
Number of Investigations	21 (14)	1 (6)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (14)	0 (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (14)	0 (6)
Number of Convictions	0 (14)	0 (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (14)	Yes (6)

Investigators have insufficient funding and resources, such as office facilities and transportation. (14) Police and other officials also have inadequate training on procedures for identifying human trafficking victims and providing referrals to protective services, including for children. (2)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Anti-Human Trafficking National Steering Committee	Manages all anti-human trafficking activities and implements the country's Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan. Chaired by MED leadership and consists of 11 participating government agencies. (3,8)

Research found no evidence of mechanisms to coordinate efforts to address all child labor, including its worst forms. Although the government has established the Anti-Human Trafficking National Steering Committee, this coordinating mechanism did not meet during the reporting period. It is reported that the failure of this steering committee to meet during this time has delayed the adoption of standard operating procedures for the identification, protection, and referral of victims. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including coverage of all forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan (2015–2019)	Establishes the government's goals to combat human trafficking, including establishing institutions, coordinating activities, raising awareness, and building capacity. (16)

Reporting indicates that little progress was made to implement the Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan during the reporting period and the Anti-Human Trafficking National Steering Committee failed to monitor its implementation. (3) Research also found no evidence of a policy designed to specifically address child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, 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 to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Family and Child Service Centers†	Nineteen Ministry of Gender and Family-operated centers that provide psychosocial support for child victims of abuse and exploitation, four of which provide temporary shelter for victims. (14)
National Victim Support Hotline (Number 1696)†	MED-operated hotline dedicated to receiving reports of human trafficking and child labor. Supported by the MPS and Maldives Immigration. (17)
Child Helpline (Number 1412)†	Ministry of Gender and Family-operated helpline established with the support of the MPS and UNICEF to receive reports of child abuse cases. (14)

† Program is funded by the Government of Maldives.

In 2018, the MPS conducted awareness-raising programs for 36 guesthouse operators and resort managers on protecting children from commercial sexual exploitation within the tourism industry. (6,18) However, Family and Child Services centers and shelters lack adequate financial and human resources, and staff are inadequately trained to deal with cases involving abused and exploited children. (14) In addition, research was unable to determine what activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement existing social programs. These programs also do not specifically address the commercial sexual exploitation of children, use of children for drug trafficking, or forced labor in domestic work.

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 Maldives (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2018
	Criminally prohibit all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children, including procuring, offering, and using children for pornographic performances.	2016 – 2018
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2018
	Publish the 2014 amendment to the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children.	2016 – 2018
Enforcement	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives training that specifically focuses on child labor issues, including training for new employees.	2009 – 2018
	Establish a referral mechanism between labor authorities and social services.	2016 – 2018
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives sufficient resources to enforce child labor laws.	2017 – 2018
	Provide sufficient funding and training to the police and prosecutors, and ensure that investigators have the resources necessary to enforce laws on the worst forms of child labor.	2013 – 2018
Coordination	Establish a coordination mechanism to combat child labor.	2009 – 2018
	Ensure that the Anti-Human Trafficking National Steering Committee meets to fulfill its mandates as required by law.	2018
Government Policies	Ensure that the Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan is being implemented and its implementation is monitored.	2018
	Adopt a policy to address the worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2018
Social Programs	Conduct and publish research on the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.	2009 – 2018
	Conduct a national child labor survey and publish the results.	2014 – 2018
	Provide sufficient funding, human resources, and staff training for Family and Child Service centers and shelters that serve abused and exploited children.	2018
	Publish information about activities that were undertaken to implement social programs, including the national hotlines.	2017 – 2018
	Implement and provide sufficient resources for programs that address the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children, the use of children for drug trafficking, and forced labor in domestic work.	2009 – 2018

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