

In 2018, Fiji made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government is extending its Free Education Grant to 52 additional schools over the next 2 years. The government also made child labor a strategic priority of its labor inspectorate and allocated additional resources and conducted additional inspections as part of the effort. However, children in Fiji engage in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. The government has not approved the draft National Action Plan on the Eradication of Child Labor, the 5-Year Strategic Plan for Combating Child Labor, the National Plan of Action to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons and Child Trafficking, or the National Action Plan on the Eradication of Child Labor. In addition, the Inter-Agency Trafficking Task Force has not been active since 2012.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Fiji engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (1-4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Fiji. 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	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		102.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (5)

Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2019. (6)

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	Cutting,† loading,† weeding, and spraying chemicals† on sugarcane (1,2,7)
	Planting, picking, and using chemicals† on tobacco (1)
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	Collecting and splitting coconuts; harvesting rice; planting, harvesting, weeding, and spraying fertilizers on roots (including dalo and yaqona); and planting and harvesting other kinds of fruits and vegetables† (1)
	Pig farming and goat and cattle herding (1)
	Fishing† and deep-sea diving† (1,2,7)
Services	Street work, including pushing wheelbarrows for shoppers in markets, vending, washing cars, shining shoes, and begging (1,7-10)
	Domestic work (1,7,10)
	Working in garages, in retail shops, or roadside stalls (2,7,10)
	Selling fruit (1)
	Collecting bottles† and scrap metal† (1,7,10)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,3,7,11-14)
	Forced labor in agriculture, begging, and domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,15,16)

† 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.







During the reporting period, the NGO Pacific Dialogue and ILO claimed to have received reports of children engaging in organized prostitution, including being advertised online.(7) Commercial sexual exploitation of children continued to occur in Fiji, particularly by family members, taxi drivers, foreign tourists, businessmen, and crew on foreign fishing vessels. (1,3,11-13,17) Parents sometimes send their children to live with families in cities or near schools to facilitate their continuing education and to perform light household work. Research found that some of these children are vulnerable to involuntary domestic work or are forced to engage in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, or shelter.(3,17-19)

The Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR) maintains a database on child labor, which standardizes current and past data in all seven districts in Fiji, but MEPIR did not publish data on child labor during the reporting period. (7)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Fiji has ratified most 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 has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Fiji's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including light work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 92 of the Employment Relations Promulgation (20)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 40 of the Employment Relations (Administration) Regulations; Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (21,22)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (22)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6 and 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 20–21 of the Immigration Act; Articles 102–103 and 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (20,23,24)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 20 of the Immigration Act; Articles 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (20,23,24)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 225–227 of the Crimes Decree; Article 62A of the Juveniles (Amendment) Act (20,23,24)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 58 of the Juveniles Act (20,26)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (27)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (27)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Compulsory Education Order; Compulsory Education Regulations (28)
Free Public Education	No		

* No conscription (27)

The Employment Relations Promulgation specifies the conditions under which children ages 13 to 15 may engage in light work, but does not include a list of activities that are permissible. (20,29) In addition, Fijian law does not criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups. (2) Although it does not appear that there are any laws that provide free basic education, the government has a policy that provides for free basic education. (30,31)

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 MEPIR that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR)	Lead agency responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor. Investigates places of employment and child labor law violations. (7) Monitors compliance with the minimum age for employment requirements and the Employment Relations Promulgation. (2,7,8) Oversees 14 Divisional Labor Offices responsible for investigating cases of child labor and making appropriate referrals. (8) Coordinates activities at the national, divisional, and district levels through the regional Inter-agency Committees on Child Abuse, including conducting trainings on child labor. Maintains a 24-hour phone line to accept reports of child labor and refers children to social services when appropriate. (2,7,29) With the establishment of a Labor Inspection System on Child Labor, 200 child labor cases have been investigated since 2011. (32,33)
Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation	Responsible for women and gender issues, including violence against women and children. (34) In 2018, the ministry provided: \$90,000 to Homes of Hope NGO to help victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking. The Poverty Benefit Scheme, which assisted 25,000 people with cash benefits and food vouchers, received \$18.5 million, a 15 percent increase from 2017. (7) Additionally, during the reporting period, the budget for the Child Protection Allowance, which helped 1,030 recipients, including single mothers, widows, and children, was increased by \$1.1 million. In addition, the Child Protection Program received \$550,000 to enact recommendations from the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (7)
Employment Relations Tribunal	Adjudicates alleged violations of child labor provisions in the Employment Relations Promulgation. (2,7)
Fiji Police Force	Investigates criminal violations regarding child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. (7) Enforces laws on child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and illicit activities. Maintains a Human Trafficking Unit (HTU) and provides training to other police units focused on combating human trafficking. (8,17) Collaborates with the Australian Federal Police to combat potential child sex tourism by Australian nationals, who comprise the largest tourist group visiting Fiji. (18) In 2019, will employ seven officers responsible for enforcing criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (7,29)

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Department of Immigration	Responsible for immigration services, refugee services, and efforts to combat human trafficking. Administers and enforces Immigration, Passport, and Citizenship Acts.(7) Coordinates with the Fiji Police Force to investigate cases involving underage victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, which are then tried in the criminal court system. (7)
Departments of Social Welfare and Public Prosecutions	Enforces laws on child trafficking. (31) Operates four homes and provides social services for child trafficking victims. (8,35)

In 2018, it was reported that the Fiji Police Force and the Department of Immigration began meeting quarterly to discuss human trafficking issues involving foreign nationals.(7) In addition, during the reporting period, the Fiji Police Force formalized the Human Trafficking Unit (HTU) to improve police anti-trafficking efforts within the country. (17)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of MEPIR that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a decrease in the number of labor inspectors.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	\$3.25 million (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	106 (36)	71 (7)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No	Yes (7)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	N/A (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	2,800 (36)	3,800 (7)
Number Conducted at Worksite	2,800 (36)	3,800 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	16 (37)	13 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (37)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (37)	0 (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (2)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (37)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (7)

In 2018, MEPIR set a goal of conducting 4,600 labor inspections between June 2018 and June 2019. (7) This would include 3,800 inspections in the formal sector, 800 in the informal sector, and 30 in child labor. The Ministry has also set the reduction of child labor as a strategic priority for the government, allocating a budget of \$160,000 budget to meet this goal.(7) MEPIR conducted outreach campaigns, including an additional 12,000 inspections in rural areas such as sugarcane farms.(7,38)

The Child Labor Unit within MEPIR was disbanded, and now all labor inspectors are expected to look for child labor violations during inspections.(7) Inspections are conducted in the workers' language, including English, Fijian Hindi, and vernacular Fijian. (2) Unannounced inspections are permitted within the informal sector, but inspectors must first seek the business owners' permission before conducting the inspection. If there is reasonable cause to believe that prior notification of an inspection will prejudice the performance of the inspector's duties, a police officer must accompany the inspector during the inspection. (7)

The Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation continued to fund the National Child Helpline for children who seek counseling, advice, and referrals for support services, and those who use it to report cases of child neglect and abuse. Research suggests that the helpline has received 33,643 calls since it was established in 2016. (37,39) In addition, the Inter-agency Committee on Child Abuse is responsible for sharing information on child labor cases, and when a referral is made, the committee is required to monitor the case. (2,4,7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in Fiji 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 training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (2)	N/A (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	2 (7)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	2 (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (37)	1 (7)
Number of Convictions	0 (37)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown (40)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (7)

During the reporting period, subject matter experts conducted 10 lectures on human trafficking topics, including the exploitation of child labor, for law enforcement officials. (7) Additionally, the HTU conducted seven major trafficking-in-persons awareness trainings, including for new police recruits and public prosecutors. (17)

In Fiji, child labor cases can be referred, on a case-by-case basis, to the Department of Social Welfare and Public Prosecutions by criminal authority agencies, including the Fiji Police Force. (2,7)

During the reporting period, there were two criminal investigations into child labor, specifically involving the “selling of minors under the age of 18 years,” and “aggravated sexual servitude and domestic trafficking in children.” (7) In the ongoing case of aggravated sexual servitude and domestic trafficking of children, the accused was charged with one count of aggravated sexual servitude and three counts of domestic trafficking. There were no convictions during the reporting period. (7)

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 child labor, including the inactivity of the Inter-Agency Trafficking Task Force.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Agency Network	Chaired by the Ministry of Labor. (38) Focuses on child labor issues at the district and provincial level. Monitors and reports cases of non-compliance. (41) Comprises inter-agency committees in nine towns in Fiji. (35,36) This body was active during the reporting period.
Inter-Agency Taskforce on Beggars	Addresses issues concerning children who beg and other exploited children. (35) Enforces zero-tolerance policy on child begging. (9) Ministry of Social Welfare and police regularly conduct patrols to identify and assist children. This body was active during the reporting period. (38)
Inter-Agency Trafficking Task Force	Implements the National Plan of Action to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons and Child Trafficking. Headed by the Department of Immigration. (8,35,36)

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Agency Committee on Child Abuse	Develops policies and procedures for the prevention of child labor, including training for communities, schools, and industries in which child labor occurs. (37) Investigates child labor cases, refers children to school, and monitors the cases when a referral is made. (2,4,7,37) Shares information on child labor cases, including the worst forms of child labor. (7) During the reporting period, data from 2016–2017 were released that indicated the committee co-facilitated 59 Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect campaigns.
Regional Inter-Agency Committees on Child Abuse	Works on child labor issues. Comprising NGOs, Fiji Police Force, Public Prosecutor's Office, Solicitor General's Office, Department of Social Welfare, MEPIR, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education. (7)

The Inter-Agency Trafficking Task Force has not been active since 2012, and the lack of coordination may limit the government's effectiveness in efforts to combat child trafficking. (8,9) The Inter-Agency Working Group on People Trafficking, outlined in the National Plan of Action to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons and Child Trafficking, has yet to be activated. (17)

Research was unable to determine whether the Regional Inter-Agency Committees on Child Abuse were active during the reporting period.

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 the lack of a national child labor action plan.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)†	A multinational strategic framework, comprising 14 South Pacific nations, created to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. (44)
Free Education Grant	Provides bus passes to students, and boats and outboard motors for island communities with staff and students commuting to school, with \$220,000 from the Ministry of Education in 2018. (7) Provides 12 years of tuition-free education for children with Fijian citizenship in 904 eligible primary and secondary schools, with 52 schools to be added over the next 2 years. Provided approximately \$32 million for tuition-free education and textbooks during the 2017–2018 fiscal year, an increase from the previous year. (19,30,37,45,46) This policy was active during the reporting period.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the government continued to support all existing anti-child labor policies. In addition, the Government of Fiji has set a goal to accelerate the eradication of child labor by 2025, and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. (7) Although the government completed a draft of the National Plan of Action to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons and Child Trafficking in 2011, the plan has not been implemented. (3,17,42,40,47) Additionally, the government has not yet approved a draft National Action Plan for Child Labor, the 5-Year Strategic Plan for Combating Child Labor, the National Plan of Action to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons and Child Trafficking, or the National Action Plan on the Eradication of Child Labor. (7,19,29,37,48,49)

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 addressing the needs of children in rural areas.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)*	Multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries. (51) Prioritizes children's rights including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. (51) During the reporting period, sponsored trainings for government officials on the rights of children, including trainings on child abuse and child labor. Provided \$126,000 to the Ministry of Education to enhance government capacity to provide child protection services. (38)

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

Program	Description
Safety Net Project†	Program that funds rehabilitation services for females who are under 18 and victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Receives referrals from various entities, including the Fiji Police. (52) This program was active during the reporting period. (38)
Food Voucher and Bus Fare Assistance†	Ministry of Education program that provides to families, whose combined annual income is less than \$7,382, \$24 in food vouchers and subsidized bus fares to offset the cost of education for children attending remote schools. (30,37,41,45,46) This program was active during the reporting period. (38)
Tuition Fee Free Grant†	Ministry of Education began to provide a subsidized tuition fee free grant for early childhood education centers or students attending preschool. (19) This program was active during the reporting period. (38)
Child Protection Program†	Administered by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation. In 2018, the government provided \$550,000 to enact recommendations from the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (7)
Child Protection Allowance†	Administered by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation. In 2018, funding increased by \$1.1 million, and now assists 1,030 recipients, including single mothers, widows, and children. (7)
The Poverty Benefit Scheme†	Administered by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation. Assists 25,000 people with cash benefits and food vouchers. (7) In 2018, received 15 percent increase in funding to \$18.5 million. (7)
Homes of Hope†	NGO program that assists victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking. The Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation contributed \$90,000 during the reporting period. (7)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Fiji.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,53)

During the reporting period, the government provided \$900,000 to the Ministry of Youth and Sports for programs dealing with job training and skills development. Additionally, the government has set the goal of conducting five child labor training sessions for the sugarcane industry. (7)

However, the government has insufficient social programs available to address the particular needs of child victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, especially for boys and for children in remote areas. (54,55) NGOs provide limited support services, but these are concentrated in the capital city of Suva. (54,56)

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 Fiji (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013 – 2018
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2016 – 2018
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are specific enough to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2018
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2018
Enforcement	Allow unannounced inspections within the informal sector without having to first request permission from the owner.	2018
Coordination	Ensure that the Inter-Agency Trafficking Task Force meets regularly to address implementation of the National Plan of Action to Eliminate Trafficking in Persons and Child Trafficking and to strengthen government efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor.	2014 – 2018
	Activate the Inter-Agency Working Group on People Trafficking by implementing the National Plan of Action to Eliminate Trafficking in Persons and Child Trafficking.	2018
	Ensure that the Regional Inter-Agency Committees on Child Abuse meet regularly.	2018

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Finalize and implement the National Action Plan for Child Labor, the 5-Year Strategic Plan for Combating Child Labor, the National Plan of Action to Eliminate Trafficking in Persons and Child Trafficking, and the National Action Plan on the Eradication of Child Labor.	2013 – 2018
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2018
	Increase the availability of support services for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, including adequate counseling and specialized shelters, especially for boys and for children in remote areas.	2010 – 2018

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