

In 2018, Mauritius made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government implemented a National Sports Policy that created a structured after-school program for children. It also increased its labor inspections by 200 percent and approved a Special Education Needs Bill, which will reduce barriers to education for children with special needs. However, children in Mauritius engage in 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 construction, vending, and working in apparel shops and restaurants. The government lacks a national policy to address all relevant worst forms of child labor. The Coordinating Committee on Child Labor, established in 2017, is no longer active and social programs to combat child labor are insufficient to address the extent of the problem.

Agalega Islands, Cargados Carajos Shoals, and Rodrigues are not shown.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritius engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-3) Children also engage in child labor in construction, vending, and working in apparel shops and restaurants. (1,2,4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mauritius. 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 (%)		98.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, 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	Producing and harvesting vegetables (1,2)
	Feeding livestock (4)
	Fishing, including diving, and casting nets and traps (2,7)
Industry	Working in factories and masonry (8)
	Construction (9)
Services	Domestic work (1,2)
	Working in apparel shops and restaurants (2)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and carrying goods in public markets (1,2,10,11)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,3,9)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (2,9)

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

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Some children in Mauritius are brought into commercial sexual exploitation by their peers or family members, or through fraudulent offers of other employment. (1,3,8) Mauritius has never conducted a national child labor survey and, therefore, information on the prevalence of child labor in the country is limited. (2) The government does not publish data on child labor or the worst forms of child labor, further limiting their ability to fully address the issue. (9)




Evidence suggests that incidents of physical and psychological abuse, including corporal punishment of students by teachers, prevent some children from attending school, which increases their risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor. Due to discrimination, children with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing education. (1,12,13) However, in November 2018, the Cabinet approved a Special Education Needs Bill, which includes establishing a regulatory authority to address and advocate for individuals with special needs, including children. (9,14)

In November 2018, the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit organized an anti-drug trafficking workshop with school administrators to address the increase in the number of child victims engaged in drug trafficking. (9)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mauritius 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 has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mauritius' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the military recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Sections 6 and 12 of the Employment Rights Act (15)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 12 of the Employment Rights Act (15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 8 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (16)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 6 of the Constitution; Article 2 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (17,18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 11 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 13A of the Child Protection Act (18,19)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 14 of the Child Protection Act; Article 253 of the Criminal Code; Article 11 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (18-20)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 30.1b-e, 38a, 41.1f, and 41.2 of the Dangerous Drugs Act (21)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	N/A†		

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
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 37.2 of the Education Act (22)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 35 of the Education Act (22)

* No conscription

† No standing military

For several years, the government has been considering adopting the Children's Bill, which aims to strengthen the existing legal framework to combat the worst forms of child labor. The bill, however, has yet to be finalized. (2,9,10,23,24)

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 authority of the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, Employment, and Training (MOLIRE) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, Employment, and Training (MOLIRE)	Enforces all labor laws, including those related to child labor. (25)
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Investigates any suspected or reported cases of child labor or violation of a child's rights, proposes laws and policies to advance children's rights, and implements trainings on child protection laws and prevention. (26,27)
Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Minors' Brigade)	Investigates crimes related to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (23) Maintains a database of all trafficking incidents involving children, and refers all cases of commercial sexual exploitation to the Child Development Unit. (28)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Undertakes criminal proceedings on laws related to the worst forms of child labor in coordination with the Minors' Brigade and the judicial courts. (29,30)
Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare's (MOGE) Child Development Unit	Enforces legislation related to children and implements policies and social programs related to child development. (2,3,31) Provides social services to victims of the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking. Provides trainings and awareness campaigns against human trafficking, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (2,3,31)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of MOLIRE that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including authorization to assess penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1.5 million (2)	\$1.5 million (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	95 (2)	89 (9)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (2)	No (9)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (2)	N/A (9)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	3,012† (2)	9,215 (32)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Number Conducted at Worksite	3,012† (2)	9,215 (32)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (2)	4 (32)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (2)	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (2)	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (9)

†Data are from January 1, 2017 to October 31, 2017. (2)

In 2018, MOLIRE increased their investigations in shops, markets, and restaurants during the summer holidays—November and December—when incidents of child labor are most prevalent; however, NGOs report that there is an insufficient number of labor inspections conducted in the informal sector, where there is evidence of child labor. Additionally, MOLIRE reported that labor inspections are not carried out in homes or private farms because labor inspectors are required to receive advance consent from the owner in order to conduct an inspection. (9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (2)	N/A (9)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (2)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	4 (33)	Unknown (9)
Number of Violations Found	4 (33)	4 (32)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	4 (32)	4 (32)
Number of Convictions	3 (33)	1 (32)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	3 (2)	Yes (32)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (9)

The first prosecution for child trafficking under the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act took place in 2017 and was transferred to the court system with a final resolution in March 2018, resulting in a conviction with a sentence of three years imprisonment. (34) In February 2018, one case of commercial sexual exploitation of a child was reported to the Minors' Brigade; however, as of November 2018, the case was still under investigation. (9) Research revealed that criminal law enforcement agencies lacked staff, transportation, and other resources to properly enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (35,36) In addition, reports indicate that coordination between the police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has been limited, mainly due to a lack of training and insufficient case tracking, which hinders efforts to investigate and prosecute child trafficking cases. (29,34) The government does not publicly make available information on its criminal enforcement efforts, and did not provide complete information for inclusion in this report.

The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare's (MOGE) Child Development Unit's mutual assistance agreement with the Minors' Brigade was revised in 2017, which changed the referral process and improved services to victims of the worst forms of child labor. This agreement remained in place in 2018,

and the government continued operating a shelter dedicated to female victims of child commercial sexual exploitation. (2,9,34)

In 2018, the Child Development Unit trained 17 newly recruited officers on investigating reports of commercial sexual exploitation of children. (37) In addition, the police's Family Protection Unit and Minors' Brigade conducted more than 110 outreach campaigns on the dangers and consequences of engaging in child sex trafficking, which reached more than 31,000 people. (3)

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 coordination among agencies.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Trafficking	Coordinates anti-trafficking efforts in Mauritius. Chaired by the Attorney General's Office and comprising representatives from MOLIRE, MOGE, and other ministries. (39,40) The committee met regularly during the reporting period. (9)
High Powered and Working Together Committee	Coordinates and implements activities on children's rights, including efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by the MOGE. (2,31) The High Powered and Working Together Committee did not meet in 2018. (32)
National Children's Council	Under the auspices of MOGE, coordinates child protection efforts in Mauritius as an independent, para-governmental entity. (2,35) In 2018, The National Children's Council provided information on child protection issues, including child trafficking, to 6,851 students in primary and secondary schools. (3)

In 2018, the Coordinating Committee of Child Labor, established by MOLIRE in February 2017, was no longer active. While the High Powered and Working Together Committee continues to exist, research was unable to determine whether it was active during the reporting period. (9) The government's efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor were hindered by a lack of coordination, information-sharing, and policy-making decisions between key coordinating mechanisms, as well as by lack of consultation with NGOs working on child protection issues. (2,9)

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 the worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Child Safety Online Action Plan	Aims to prevent online sexual exploitation of children by strengthening the legal framework and developing awareness-raising programs. Implemented by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, in conjunction with the MOGE, the Minors' Brigade, and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. (41) In 2018, the government organized an Internet safety workshop for Safer Internet Day and conducted Internet safety education programs in schools and community centers, reaching 1,850 individuals. (32,42)
Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan (2008–2020)	Aims to improve equity of access to primary, secondary, and technical and vocational education, and to provide social services for youth. Overseen by the Ministry of Education. (43,44) In 2018, the National Assembly passed the Special Education Needs Bill to establish a regulatory authority to address and advocate for children with special needs in primary and secondary education. (14,45)
Government Development Program—Achieving Meaningful Change (2015–2019)	Aims to increase access to social protection services for vulnerable populations, including children, and emphasizes a zero-tolerance policy for the use of children in drug trafficking. (46–48) In 2018, the government organized workshops with school administrators to develop strategies to combat drug trafficking in schools. (49,50) The Commission of Enquiry on Drugs submitted its final report outlining recommendations to address drug trafficking in Mauritius. (51)
National Sports and Physical Activity Policy (2018–2028)†	Provides a structured sports program available to all ages. The policy focuses on children and young adults and is available after school hours, to help reduce children's vulnerability to child labor and illicit activities. (9,52)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

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Research found no evidence of policies to combat other worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, the National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, drafted in 2016, has yet to be adopted by the government. (2,39,53-55)

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 the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Awareness-Raising Programs on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking†	Government program created to educate the public on preventing commercial sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking. (56) In 2018, MOGE and the National Children's Council conducted awareness campaigns on child abuse prevention and the prevention of sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children, reaching approximately 2,500 individuals. (32)
Community Child Protection Program†	Government program that supports child protection activities nationwide by identifying children at risk for abuse and neglect and rehabilitating child abuse victims. (2,31) In 2018, the government, in partnership with an NGO, conducted awareness-raising campaigns on commercial sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking in primary and secondary schools, reaching approximately 6,851 children and 487 adults. (32)
Drop-in Centers, Shelters, and Institutional Care†	Government programs that provide rehabilitation services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Monitored by the Child Development Unit. (23,29,31) In 2018, the government continued its annual grant of \$409,960 for the operation of a daycare center, a children's shelter, and a drop-in center for trafficking victims. The government also continued its operation of a shelter capable of hosting up to 32 children, provided reintegration services, and placed child trafficking victims into families. (3)
IOM Country Program	IOM program to build capacity of relevant government agencies to protect children from exploitation and human trafficking. (53,57) Active in 2018. (24)
Education Assistance Programs†	Government programs that increase access to quality primary education for vulnerable children, including the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Program, which provides educational support to 7,500 households in 229 geographic pockets of poverty and in the Education Priority Zones; designed to provide equal opportunities to primary school children throughout the country. (44) In 2018, programs continued to provide meals and school materials to children from vulnerable families. (45)

† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.

Although the government has established an oversight body to improve the effectiveness of institutional care facilities and shelters, evidence suggests that there continues to be a lack of appropriate standards of care, inadequate provision of services, and overcrowding in some centers that house orphans, child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and child victims of other types of abuses. (29,34,52,56,58,59)

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 Mauritius (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2018
	Finalize and implement legislation to harmonize legal protections for children, such as The Children's Bill.	2018
Enforcement	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by authorizing inspectors to assess penalties.	2015 – 2018
	Increase the amount of training, human resources, and funding for agencies responsible for enforcing criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor.	2011 – 2018
	Improve coordination between the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions to ensure that violations are adequately prosecuted.	2017 – 2018
	Publish information regarding the number of criminal investigations conducted.	2018
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2018

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Allow labor inspectors to conduct unannounced inspections in homes and on private farms.	2018
	Increase the number of targeted inspections in the informal sector, including the number of inspections occurring outside of summer holiday months.	2018
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies, including the High Powered and Working Together Committee, are active and are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2017 – 2018
	Ensure that coordination mechanisms share information and policy-making decisions to combat the worst forms of child labor.	2012 – 2018
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation.	2014 – 2018
	Adopt the draft National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking.	2017 – 2018
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the prevalence of child labor in Mauritius to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2018
	Ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, can attend school without fear of physical or psychological abuse.	2014 – 2018
	Ensure that victims of commercial sexual exploitation have access to comprehensive and quality social services.	2010 – 2018

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