

In 2015, Maldives made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government acceded to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, incorporated a human trafficking module into the training curriculum for all new Maldives Immigration hires, and adopted the National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan (2015–2019). Although research is limited, evidence indicates that children are engaged in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking in Maldives. The Government has not determined specific hazardous occupations or activities that are prohibited for children and the compulsory education age of 13 leaves children ages 13 to 15 vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. The Government does not have a coordinating mechanism, policy, or social program that specifically addresses child labor, including its worst forms.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, evidence indicates that children are engaged in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking in Maldives.(1, 2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Maldives.

Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	3.9 (2,364)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	79.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	4.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		114.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2009, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(3)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Demographic and Health Survey, 2009.(4)

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	Fishing,* activities unknown (5)
Services	Domestic work* (1, 2)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation,* sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (1, 2)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

‡ 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. Some girls from Bangladesh and Maldives are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to Malé, the capital of Maldives, but evidence of the problem is limited.(2) The Maldives Human Rights Commission is assessing the scope of the human trafficking problem in the country, but its findings have not been published.(6, 7)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Maldives 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	

In 2015, the Government of Maldives acceded to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Section 6 of the Employment Act (8)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 7 of the Employment Act (8)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	No		
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 3 of the Employment Act; Sections 12–16 of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (8, 9)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 12–15 of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (9)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 17–19 of the Special Provisions Act to Deal with Child Sex Abuse Offenders; Ministry of Justice Circular on the Penalty for Fornication and Sexual Offenders (10, 11)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Section 133(c)(1) of the Drugs Act (12)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children (7)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	13‡	Legislation title unknown (13)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 36 of the Constitution (14)

* No conscription (15)

‡ Age calculated based on available information

While the legal framework prohibits the employment of children in work that may be detrimental to their health and safety, the Government has not determined specific hazardous occupations and activities that are prohibited for children.(16)

Children in Maldives are only required to attend school up to age 13. This standard makes children ages 13 through 15 vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor because they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Labor Relations Authority, Ministry of Economic Development (MED)	Enforce the child labor provisions of the Employment Act. Assess minor fines and make recommendations to the Minister of Human Resources on additional fines or other actions to penalize violators.(17)
Family and Child Protection Unit, Maldives Police Service (MPS)	Investigate complaints of child labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Refer cases to the Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution.(17)
Prosecutor General's Office	Prosecute crimes, including those involving the worst forms of child labor.(17)
Family Child Protection Services (FCPS), Ministry of Law and Gender	Receive referrals of children who have been exploited, including in child commercial sexual exploitation, and provide care for such victims.(17)
Maldives Immigration	Maintain a blacklist of employers who violate any provision of the Employment Act and prohibit blacklisted employers from hiring new workers until violations are corrected. Identify victims of human trafficking in coordination with the MPS.(17, 18)
Anti-Human Trafficking Units, the MPS, and DIE	Investigate human trafficking-related offences and enforce laws prohibiting trafficking in persons.(19)

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Maldives took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	13 (20)	Unknown
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown	Unknown
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	No (20)	Unknown
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
■ Refresher Courses Provided	No (20)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections	102 (20)	Unknown
■ Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown	Unknown
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (20)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Unknown

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2015, criminal law enforcement agencies in Maldives took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Training for Investigators		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (18)
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (18)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor (cont)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
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 (17)	Yes (17)

In 2015, a human trafficking module was included in the training curriculum for all new Maldives Immigration hires.(18) The IOM also conducted trafficking in persons training for government officials, including the Maldives Police Service (MPS), Maldives Immigration, and the Ministry of Law and Gender.(18)

In 2014, the most recent year for which information is available, anti-human-trafficking units in the MPS comprised seven officers, including three female officers.(20) The Family and Child Protection Unit employed 25 officers to process child abuse cases in Malé, and an unknown number of officers in police stations throughout the country's islands. The Prosecutor General's Office employed 45 prosecutors for all areas of its work across the country.(17)

Investigators have insufficient funding and resources, such as office facilities and transportation.(17) Police and other officials lack adequate training on procedures for identifying human trafficking victims and providing referrals to protective services, including for children.(21) Maldives Immigration and the MPS lacked the capacity to pursue child trafficking investigations.(18)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Although the Government has established a coordination mechanism on human trafficking, research found no evidence of mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including all its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Anti-Human Trafficking Steering Committee	Coordinate anti-human-trafficking activities and implement the country's National Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan under MED leadership.(17, 22) Members include the MPS, the Supreme Court, the People's Parliament (Majlis), the Attorney General's Office, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, DIE, the Customs Service, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and the NGO Advocating the Rights of Children.(9, 10)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Maldives has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan (2015–2019)†	Sets out the Government's goals to combat human trafficking.(18)
UNDP Country Program for Maldives (2011–2015)*	Aimed to support the ILO in developing a Decent Work framework to address youth unemployment. Aimed to promote equitable access to justice and rule of law by increasing the capacity of the Prosecutor General's Office, including training on human rights issues.(23)

* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Although the Government of Maldives has adopted the National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan, research found no evidence of a policy to address child labor, including its worst forms.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Government of Maldives funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
FCPS Shelters and Rehabilitation Centers	Ministry of Law and Gender-operated centers on many of the country's islands, which provide services such as temporary shelter, vocational training, and rehabilitation and counseling for children in need, which could include children rescued from abusive work situations.(6, 24)
Blue Ribbon Campaign Against Human Trafficking†	Government campaign, implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that aims to raise awareness of human trafficking in Maldives among students and the business community.(25)
Child Help Linet	Government-maintained hotline used to report cases of child abuse and general issues that children face.(26)
Trafficking in Persons Hotlinet	Government-operated hotline dedicated to receiving reports of human trafficking cases.(18)
UNICEF Country Program (2011–2015)	UNICEF program, worked with the Government to monitor schools to ensure that authorities and communities maintained safe and sanitary learning environments for children.(27) Worked to build the capacity of the FCPS staff to protect children from violence and abuse. Advocated increased protection for children who are victims of crimes and witnesses to crimes.(27)
Enhancing Education Development Project†	\$11 million World Bank and Government of Maldives-funded, 5-year project, that aims to strengthen access to primary and secondary school education in Maldives and improve its quality. Funded with approximately \$10 million from the World Bank and \$1 million from the Government of Maldives.(28)

† Program is funded by the Government of Maldives.

In 2015, the Government allocated funds for the construction of a new shelter for victims of human trafficking. The shelter is expected to be completed in 2016.(18)

Existing social programs do not specifically address the worst forms of child labor in the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Maldives (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children.	2009 – 2015
	Raise the compulsory education age to 16 to be consistent with the minimum age for work.	2011 – 2015
Enforcement	Collect and publicize information on labor law enforcement, including labor inspection data and child labor law violations, and information on criminal law enforcement of the worst forms of child labor, including the number of investigations, violations, prosecutions, and convictions.	2013 – 2015
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate receives training on child labor issues.	2009 – 2015
	Provide sufficient funding and training to the police and prosecutors, to ensure that investigators have the resources necessary to enforce laws on the worst forms of child labor.	2013 – 2015
Coordination	Establish a coordination mechanism to combat child labor.	2009 – 2015
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the UNDP Country Program for Maldives.	2014 – 2015
	Adopt a policy to address child labor, including its worst forms.	2014 – 2015
Social Programs	Conduct and publish research on commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.	2009 – 2015
	Conduct a national child labor survey and publish the results.	2014 – 2015
	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2015

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